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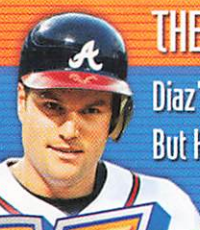

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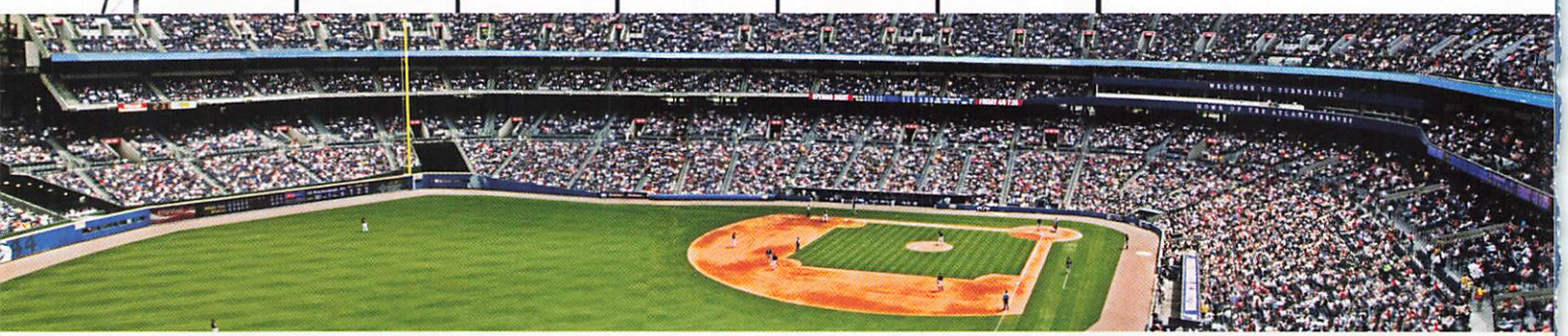

2010 SEASON SCHEDULE

APRIL

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2 CWS EXH*	3 CWS EXH*
4	5 CHI	6	7 CHI	8 CHI	9 SF	10 SF
11 SF	12 SD	13 SD	14 SD	15	16 COL	17 COL
18 COL	19	20 PHI	21 PHI	22 PHI	23 NYM	24 NYM
25 NYM	26 STL	27 STL	28 STL	29 STL	30 HOU	

MAY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1 HOU
2 HOU	3	4 WAS	5 WAS	6 WAS	7 PHI	8 PHI
9 PHI	10 MIL	11 MIL	12 MIL	13	14 ARI	15 ARI
16 ARI	17 NYM	18 NYM	19 CIN	20 CIN	21 PIT	22 PIT
23 PIT	24	25 FLA	26 FLA	27 FLA	28 PIT	29 PIT
30 PIT	31 PHI Memorial Day					

JUNE

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1 PHI	2 PHI	3 LAD	4 LAD	5 LAD
6 LAD	7 ARI	8 ARI	9 ARI	10 ARI	11 MIN	12 MIN
13 MIN	14	15 TB	16 TB	17 TB	18 KC	19 KC
20 KC Father's Day	21	22 CWS	23 CWS	24 CWS	25 DET	26 DET
27 DET	28 WAS	29 WAS	30 WAS			

JULY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2 FLA	3 FLA
4 FLA Independence Day	5 PHI	6 PHI	7 PHI	8	9 NYM	10 NYM
11 NYM	12 ALL-STAR GAME ANAHEIM	13	14	15 MIL	16 MIL	17 MIL
18 MIL	19	20 SD	21 SD	22 SD	23 FLA	24 FLA
25 FLA	26	27 WAS	28 WAS	29 WAS	30 CIN	31 CIN

AUGUST

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1 CIN	2 NYM	3 NYM	4 NYM	5 SF	6 SF	7 SF
8 SF	9 HOU	10 HOU	11 HOU	12	13 LAD	14 LAD
15 LAD	16 LAD	17 WAS	18 WAS	19 WAS	20 CHI	21 CHI
22 CHI	23 COL	24 COL	25 COL	26	27 FLA	28 FLA
29 FLA	30 NYM	31 NYM				

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1 NYM	2 NYM	3 FLA	4 FLA
5 FLA	6 PIT	7 PIT	8 PIT	9 STL	10 STL	11 STL
12 STL	13 WAS	14 WAS	15 WAS	16	17 NYM	18 NYM
19 NYM	20 PHI	21 PHI	22 PHI	23	24 WAS	25 WAS
26 WAS	27 FLA	28 FLA	29 FLA	30	1 PHI	2 PHI
3 PHI						

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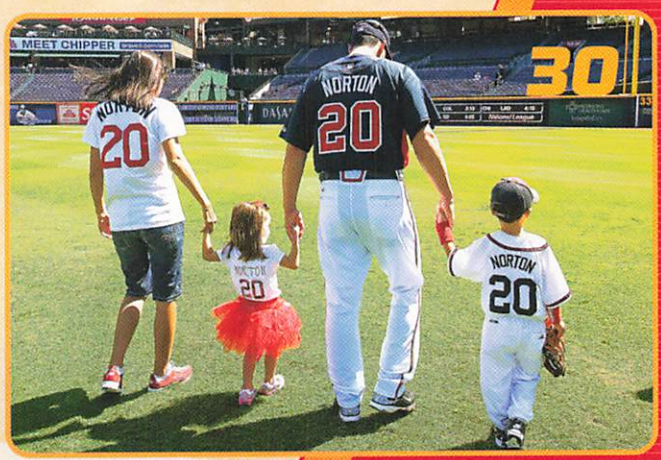
ATLANTA BRAVES



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COVER CREDITS

YUNEL ESCOBAR
Courtesy of the Atlanta Braves

Matt Diaz: Atlanta Braves

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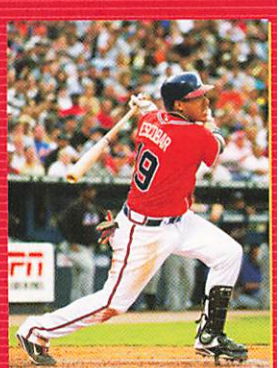

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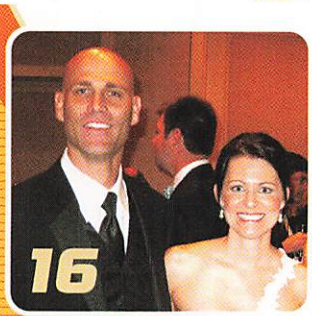

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THE EXCITEMENT OF

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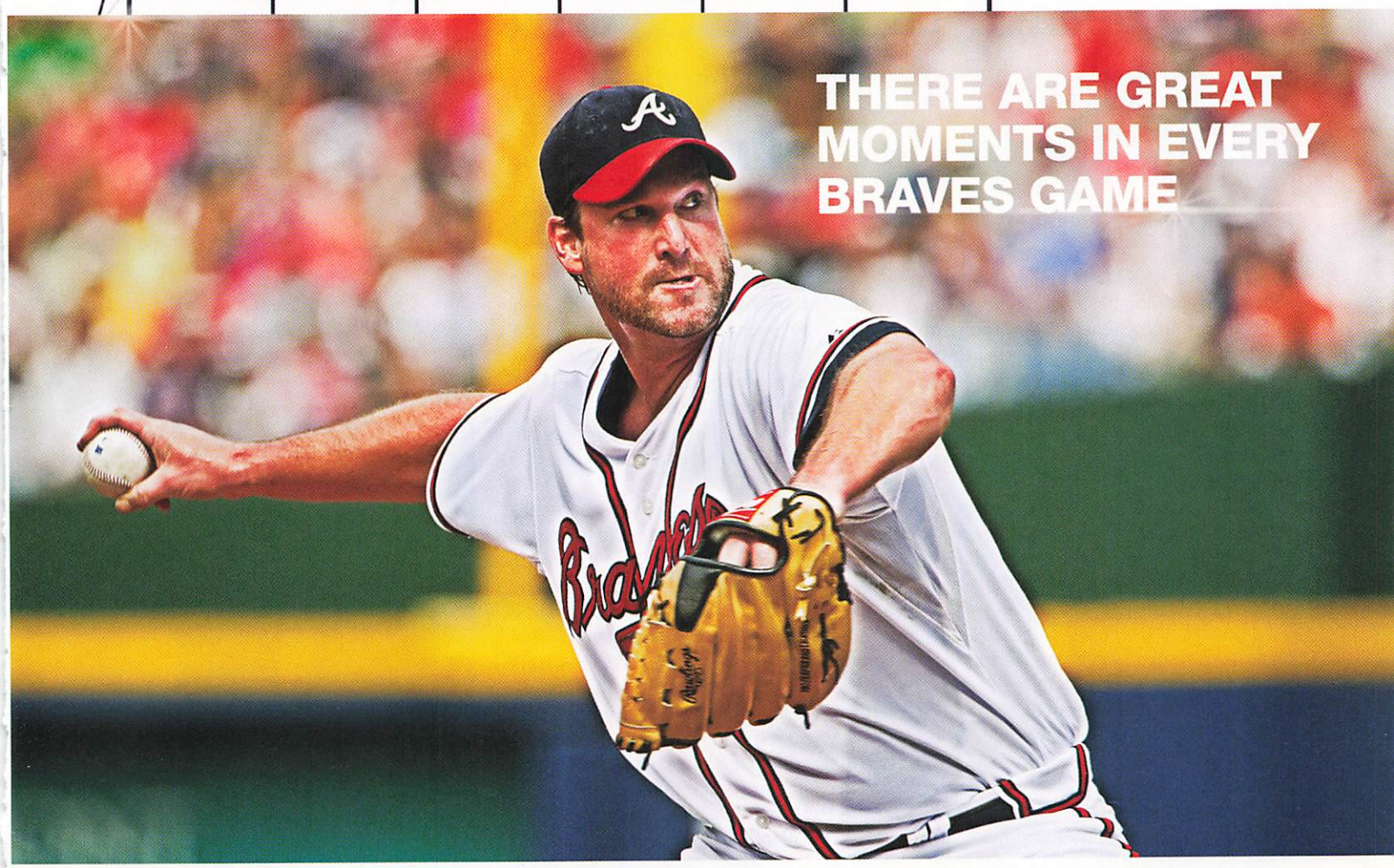

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Braves

A DAY AT THE OFFICE

For Players And Coaches, There's A Great Deal Of Time, Effort And Routine Involved In Being True Professionals

BY PATTY RASMUSSEN

Matt Diaz readily acknowledges a certain natural talent for playing baseball. Whether the talent comes from genetics, environment or a combination of factors, Diaz has proven he can play ball at the major league level. But he also pads that "gift" with a professional work ethic that guides the way he conducts his business, day in, day out, season after season.

"Most guys have their own pre-game routine," said Diaz. "And baseball players like routine. I've used the exact routine since 2003. Once you find something, you don't want to change it."

The importance of a pre-game, pre-batting practice routine was impressed on Diaz in 2003, when he was getting his first big league exposure, by a veteran teammate on the Tampa Bay Devil Rays named Terry Shumpert.

"He told me it was important as a bench player to not lose your edge," recalled Diaz. "He told me to get a routine and stay with it."

Diaz never forgot the advice and, most importantly, acted upon it.

So now, six years after Shumpert imparted his nugget of knowledge, Diaz still arrives at the ballpark five hours before a 7:10 game.

"I watch film, first thing," he said. "I'll watch the opposing starting pitcher's recent outing if I'm in the lineup. If I'm not in the lineup, I make sure to watch film of their relievers. Even though I know most of the pitchers, I want to refresh myself and make sure I know how they've been pitching lately."

Next, Diaz goes to the batting cage.

"I have a 45-pitch swing routine off the tee," he said. "If I haven't been in any games lately, I might hit pitches off the Iron Mike pitching machine."

Though some players partner up in the cage, one placing balls on the tee while the other takes his swing, switching places when the ball box is empty, Diaz prefers to hit alone.

"I'll even come back to the cages if it's too crowded," he said.

After he hits, Diaz might warm up with weights or run on the treadmill or elliptical machine.

"Some days, we'll go out for early outfield practice with Chino (Cadahia)," he said.

No matter what, he is absolutely steadfast in his pre-batting practice routine, especially hitting.

"Success in any swing sport - baseball, tennis, golf - is repetition," he said by way of explaining his focus on his hitting routine. "I know it doesn't look like it at the plate, but I'm attempting to perfect the imperfect swing!"

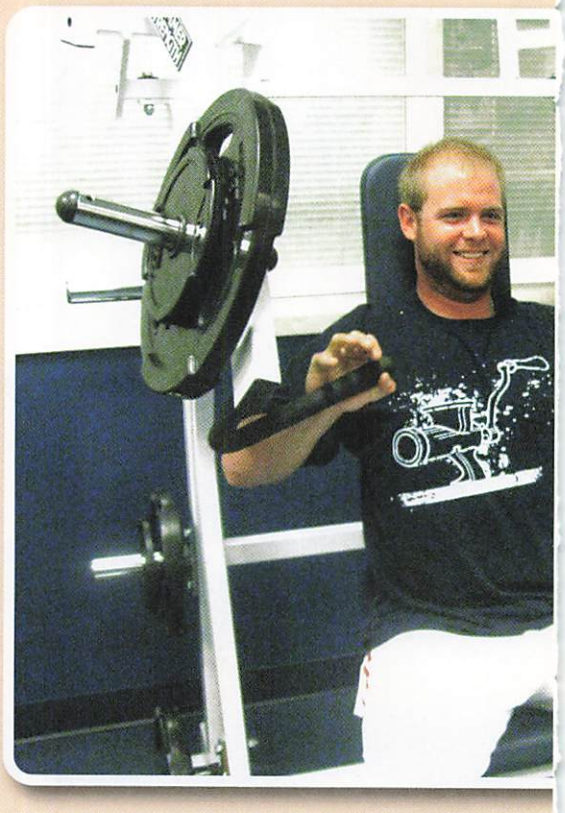
Teammates and players around the league might want to take note of Diaz's words and deeds. The Braves' outfielder at-large went on a post All-Star break tear, steadily racking up hits, homers, and RBIs while carrying an impressive .324 batting average into early September.

The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines professionalism as: "The conduct, aims, or qualities that characterize a professional person."

Conduct, like preparation and punctuality... aims such as perfection and success... and qualities like pride and diligence, don't merely happen. Players don't just show up, throw on their uniforms and take the field. They're at the ballpark hours before a game, often putting in workouts that outpace any activity they'll see on the field that night. Pre-game professionalism is practiced and on display every day at Turner Field in the routines of Braves players and coaches.

For a 7:10 game, it is not surprising to see the player's parking lot begin to fill starting at 1:30, even earlier for Bobby Cox and his coaches - Chino Cadahia, Glenn Hubbard, Roger McDowell, Terry Pendleton, Eddie Perez and Brian Snitker.

"We get here at 12 o'clock or 12:30 at the latest, every day," said Perez. "Me and Roger get together and watch video of that day's opponent's most-recent game. We have a coaches meeting at 1:30 every day.



Matt Diaz (facing page) normally arrives at Turner Field five hours before game time and goes through a detailed routine of working on his swing, long before the team takes batting practice on the field. Brian McCann (inset) also is one of the first players to arrive and follows a pre-game routine that often includes weight lifting between batting practice and the game.

We're talking about the other team and how we're going to handle them. Roger and Chino do most of the talking. Roger talks about how we're going to pitch each batter. Then we go over the scouting reports from our advance scouts."

From there, the coaches get ready for the rest of their day. Some, like Perez, work out at the ballpark before the game. McDowell meets with the catchers to talk about the pitchers who'll work during the series. Cadahia writes up copies of the lineup and gets them to the appropriate people - umpires, opposing manager, Cox, and the day's starting pitcher. Pendleton works with players in the batting cages, and often Cadahia, Hubbard and Snitker will run fielding drills with players outside.

Prior to each series, unless it's against a

PHOTOS: PATTY RASMUSSEN

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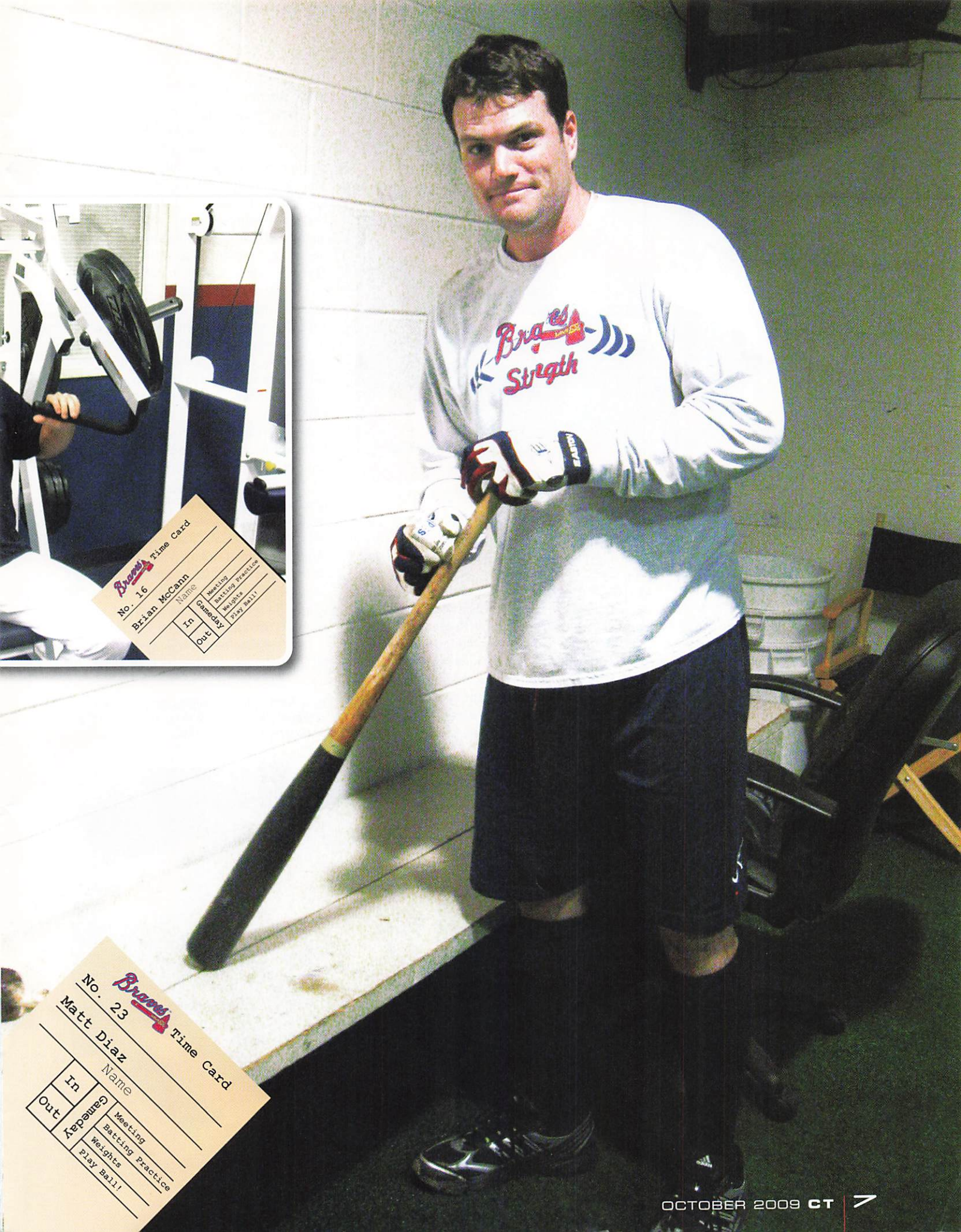
Braves Time Card
No. 16
Brian McCann
Name
In
Out
Gameday
Meeting
Batting Practice
Weights
Play Ball!
Braves Time Card
No. 23
Matt Diaz
Name
In
Out
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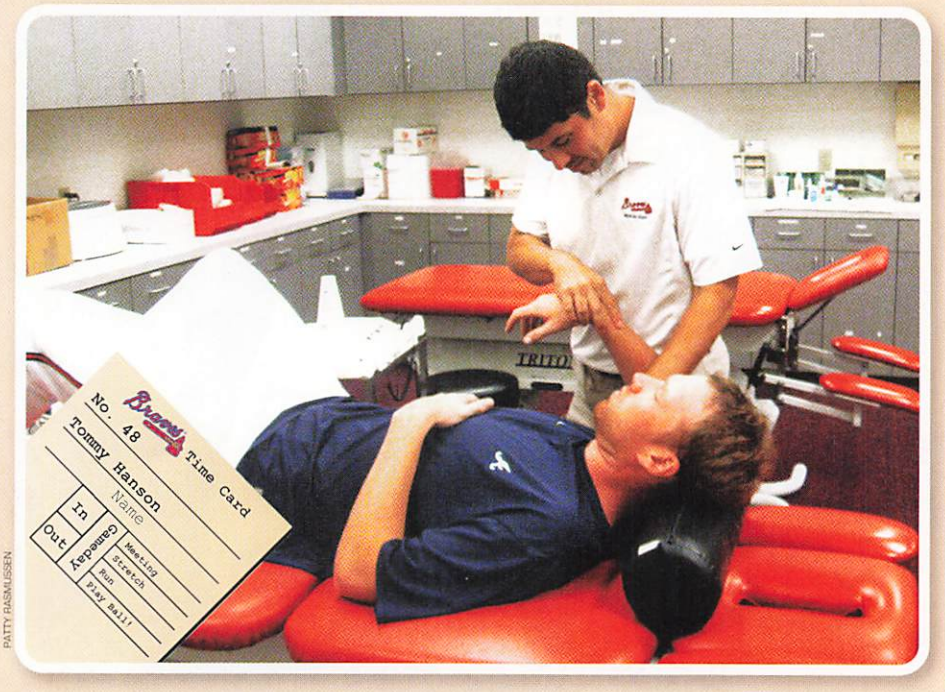
Meeting
Batting Practice
Weights
Play Ball!



PATTY RASMUSSEN

Physical therapist Lloyd van Pamelen massages and stretches the valuable pitching arm of rookie Tommy Hanson.

team the Braves played recently, there is a team meeting in the clubhouse at 4:30 p.m. The purpose of the meeting is for everyone to hear the scouting report on the evening's opponent and to get on the same page.

"Roger's going to tell them how we're pitching guys," said Perez. "And Chino is going to talk about how we're going to be positioned in the field. Sometimes we go over signs again, and sometimes we change signs before a series."

Though the coaches lead the meeting, sometimes players have a chance to speak.

"When we played Boston and New York (Yankees), we had (former first baseman) Casey Kotchman and Garrett Anderson talk because they'd faced those pitchers more than we had," said Cadahia. "It's just information, and sometimes it's helpful. It's being prepared so nothing catches you by surprise. A guy will burn us every now and then, but usually we don't see too many surprises. Preparation minimizes that risk of being surprised."

The team meeting rarely lasts longer than 15 minutes and is followed by batting practice. But by that time, many players have done their personal workouts or have gotten treatment from trainers.

Like Diaz, Martin Prado adjusted his pre-game workout routine as his playing time increased.

"When you're not playing every day, you have to change your approach," Prado said. "I didn't use the same routine when I was on the bench. I work more when I'm not playing, because I have more time and I need to be ready."

During most of the season, Prado ate his main meal at home. His mother, Irma, lived with him from spring training until mid-August when she returned to Venezuela.

"It was a big advantage for me to have her here," he said. "By the time I got up, usually around 12:30 or so, she cooked our meal."

Prado normally arrives at the ballpark at 2 o'clock and immediately gets in the hot tub to warm up his muscles.

"I get dressed, go to the workout room, and run on the treadmill for five to 10 minutes," he said. "Then I start doing my stretching, exercising for my groin and hamstring. I do rotator cuff exercises and forearm exercises, then I stretch again."

Once he finishes his workout, Prado spends 20 minutes in the batting cages, hitting from a tee and also with hitting coach Terry Pendleton tossing to him. After voluntary early infield practice, Prado participates in team batting practice. If he's dissatisfied with his batting practice swings, he'll go back to the batting cages to get more cuts. Prado's pre-game routine ends with a visit to the video room to watch that night's pitcher and his at-bats from the night before.

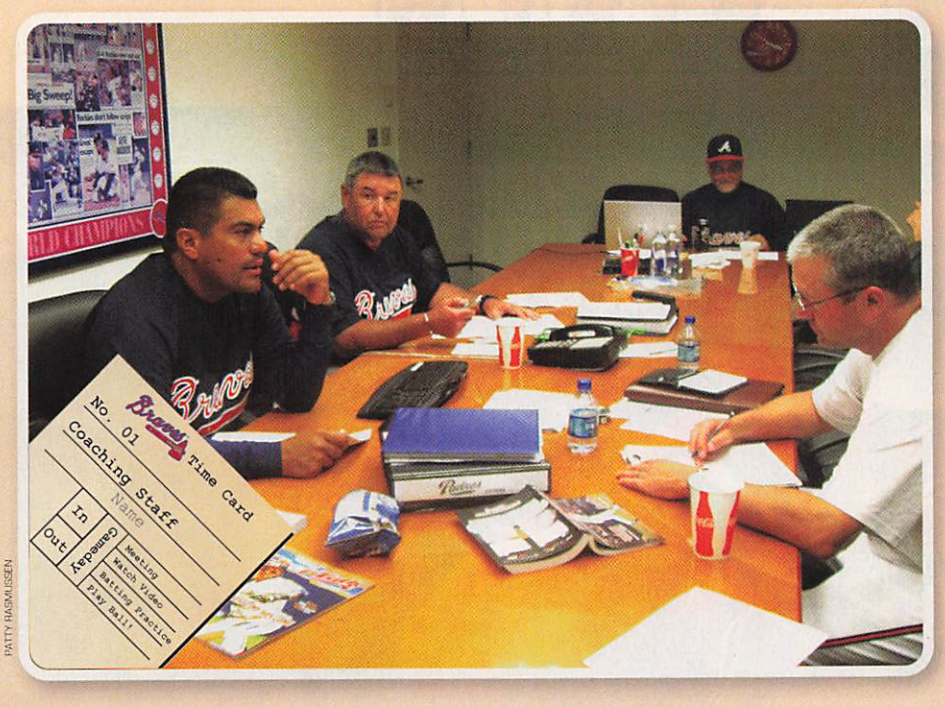
All-Star Brian McCann is another Turner Field early-bird, arriving at the ballpark around 1:30 for a 7:10 game.

"The first thing I do is get together with (backup catcher) David Ross and Roger (McDowell) and go over scouting reports, go over the hitters. At this point Roger has already looked at video, so he's just bringing us the reports of what he's seen. We all talk about what we saw last time we faced that team. We go over the best way to handle each pitcher and prepare for the series."

After talking with McDowell and Ross, McCann heads to the batting cages for

PATTY RASMUSSEN

Jair Jurrjens (L) and Javier Vazquez spend some pre-game time watching video, both to study their pitching mechanics, as well as to see how opposing hitters adjust to them.



PATTY RASMUSSEN

Coaches (L-R) Eddie Perez, Chino Cadahia, Glenn Hubbard and Roger McDowell get together in the clubhouse conference room for a pre-game discussion about that night's opponent.

about 15 minutes of hitting.

"The length of time really depends on the time of year," he said. "Early in the season, I might be working on the swing, getting in the repetitions, but late in the season, I'm just getting loose for batting practice."

McCann hits in the third group during batting practice, meaning he spends a good deal of time in the outfield shagging flyballs before hitting.

After batting practice, McCann returns to the clubhouse where he might head to the workout room to lift weights or visit the video room to check out the opposition. He's usually not alone in the video room. Many Braves take advantage of the information to be gained watching video.

Pitcher Javier Vazquez doesn't watch a lot of film, but when he does, he's looking for something specific.

"If I'm struggling, I'll watch my mechanics," he said. "I watch the hitters to see how they are or aren't adjusting."

Rookie pitcher Tommy Hanson is remarkably low-key prior to games, even on the days he starts. Arriving at Turner Field at 3 p.m., Hanson said he usually just "hangs out," listening to music on his iPod or playing a video game on his phone.

"I'll look at film or read the scouting report again," he said. "I eat three hours before the game. I'm not picky about what I eat, but it's always three hours before the game. That's one thing I'm a stickler on."

Like all starters, he has a routine, running and throwing, that changes slightly each day.

"Even on my easy day (the day before he pitches), I'll go out and run about eight sprints, something light to get my muscles warm," said Hanson.

On days when he pitches, Hanson doesn't start doing anything until an hour before the game.

"I'll go in the training room and heat my arm up, and then I'll go out half an hour before the game to stretch," he said. "I know Kenshin (Kawakami) warms up way before his start and throws and stuff, but I don't do that. I just hang out until it's time to pitch."

In contrast to Hanson, veteran pitcher Derek Lowe seems like a perpetual motion machine. Early in the season, Lowe ran the field level stadium steps one day between starts. After a rigorous stretching routine, he'd run up one aisle and down the next, working his way around the stadium bowl. Afterward, he performed agility drills or threw long toss before heading inside to lift weights and work out his rotator cuff and core muscles.

By mid-August, however, Lowe altered his workout significantly. For starters, he stopped running the stadium steps.

"I'd been running the last nine months, and I'm not going to get in any better shape," said Lowe.

He also stopped throwing bullpen sessions, though he continued to long toss. And he continued an unusual throwing routine, of sorts. Around 3:30 each day, Lowe spends up to an hour in the bullpen, standing on the mound, going through the motions of pitching, visualizing pitches and picking apart his mechanics. It was a pre-game ritual he continued even late in the season.

While Lowe works on pitches, other players used the pre-batting practice time to run laps around the warning track. At 1,300 feet per lap, four laps measures just under a mile. Among the regulars who run outdoors are Manny Acosta and Mike Gonzalez. Both run for 20 minutes, probably two miles, before heading back inside for more pre-game work. Gonzalez did the same fitness routine from spring training until the season's end. He focuses most of his attention on developing overall stamina and strength in his core muscles.

"I need it to take me through the long season," he said.

Gonzalez arrives at the ballpark around 3 o'clock, but goes straight to work.

"I don't hang out," he said. "I want to be working out for one hour before batting practice. This is the office. I can hang out at home."

After his run, Gonzalez finishes his workout inside, doing abdominal crunches and a tossing routine with a heavy ball weighing anywhere from 6 to 8 pounds. It's an unusual way to work his core. Different tosses work different muscles. For example, he raises the ball over his head and slams it down on the concrete floor, bouncing the ball to whoever is on hand to catch it - physical therapist Lloyd Van Pamelin or a fellow member of the bullpen.

Gonzalez has a practical reason why he takes his pre-game routine so seriously.

"I love to eat whatever I want to eat, whenever I want to eat it," he said. "I gain weight really easily, but I have to keep my weight around 210 pounds."

Gonzalez said that five years ago, his weight ballooned to 255 pounds.

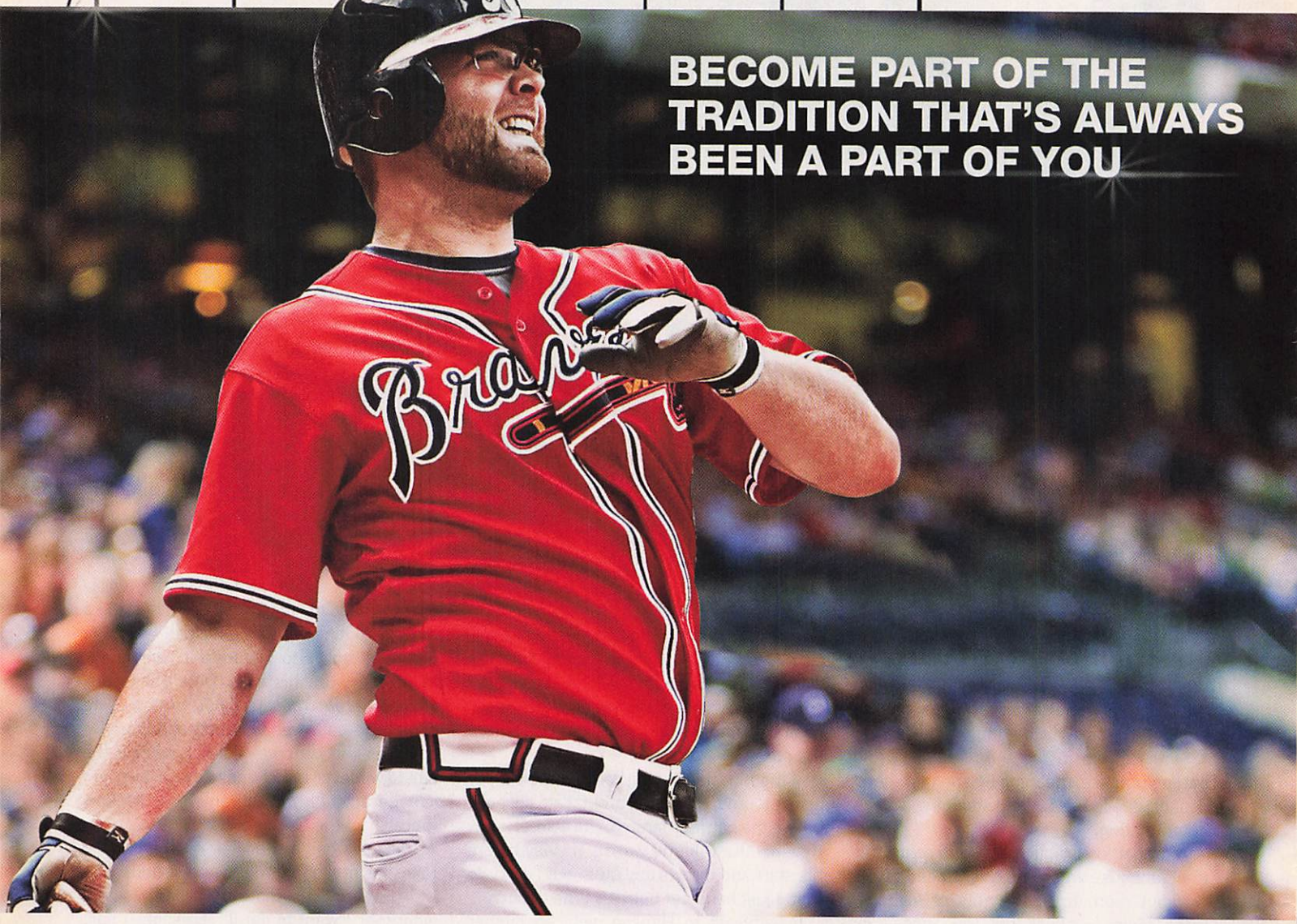
"That was too heavy," he said. "In Pittsburgh, I worked out six days a week, but (in Atlanta) with the heat, I cut it back to four days. If I get too skinny, 205 or 200 pounds, I feel weak."

But it's more than just maintaining his physique.

"For me, the pre-game workout is about professionalism. It means that I'm mentally here," Gonzalez said. "My routine gets me in that mindset, and I feel prepared for success that day. I don't want to ever say, 'If I could have done this, I would have been successful.' You know, if you could have done it, then you should have done it."

THE EXCITEMENT OF

TURNER FIELD



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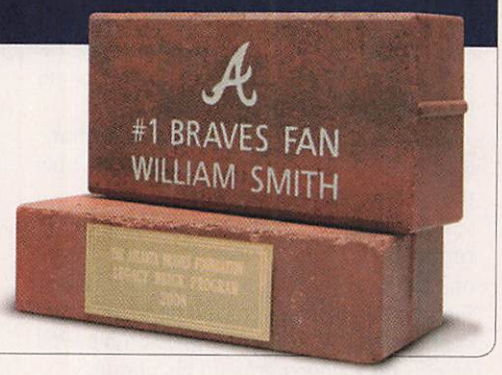

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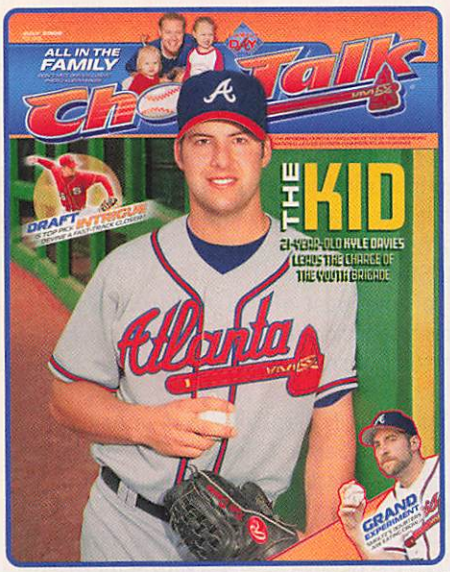
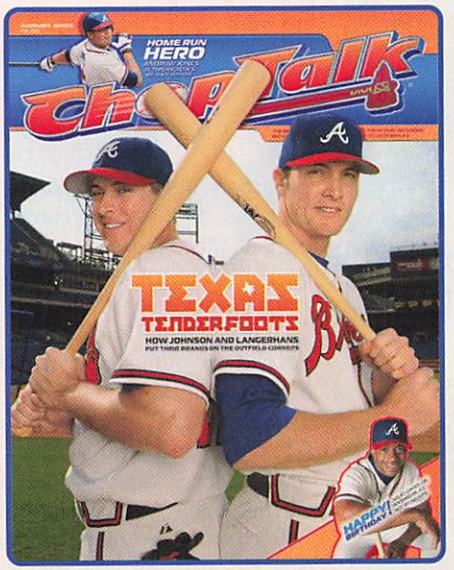
PAINTING THE CORNERS

BY JAY BUSBEE

WHERE'D THE "BABY BRAVES" GO?





In the summer of 2005, the Baby Braves were all the rage, including Kyle Davies (July CT cover, L) and Kelly Johnson and Ryan Langerhans (August CT cover, R).

IF YOU WERE TO RANK the most memorable Braves seasons, beginning with Worst to First, you'd naturally put 1991 and 1995 at the top. After that, though, I'd put 2005 right in the mix. Sure, it ended on a painful note – watching the Astros win the Division Series on a walkoff homer in the 18th – but short of '91, it was Atlanta's most unexpected playoff run. And it was all because of a bunch of kids still in elementary school when The Streak began.

Entering 2005, the Braves appeared every inch the veteran championship contender they'd been for the past decade. John Smoltz was returning to the rotation after four years as a closer, Tim Hudson was making his Braves debut, and All-Stars dotted the infield.

Still, there were ominous signs. The outfield only returned one player, Andruw Jones. The rotation, past Smoltz and Hudson, was dubious. While the minors were stocked, how much could a bunch of kids in diapers, relatively speaking, help the big league club?

Answer: Plenty, as it turned out.

The '05 season saw the coming of the "Baby Braves," an unprecedented onslaught of rookies that Bobby Cox somehow turned into a playoff team. And while they didn't lead Atlanta to the World Series, or even to the NLCS, they injected a shot of hope into the franchise and its fans, reversing declining attendance. So, only four years later, what happened to this group of promising youngsters that once seemed capable of extending The Streak beyond 14?

Kelly Johnson: The first of the Baby Braves, called up on May 29, Johnson didn't exactly have a debut to remember – he lost track of a flyball and got caught daydreaming on the basepaths. But he's one of just two Baby Braves who remains.

Kyle Davies: It's tough to imagine a more demanding rookie assignment than making your major league debut against the defending World Champions on their turf. But that's exactly what Davies did, throwing five shutout innings against the Red Sox at Fenway. He's now trying to hang onto a job in the Kansas City rotation.

Brian McCann: Pressed into what was supposed to be three days of major league service when Johnny Estrada got leveled by the Angels' Darin Erstad, McCann instead won a permanent job. He's been an All-Star each year since then, and Estrada is looking for work.

Jeff Francoeur: Frenchy made the splashiest rookie debut in decades when he homered in his very first game. But his career in Atlanta turned into a rollercoaster of promise and performance until he was dealt to the Mets in July.

Chuck James: The Glavine-esque lefty only appeared in two games in 2005, but appeared primed for stardom after reeling off 11 wins in 2006. Unfortunately, he'd never have that kind of success again, and the guy who worked as a window installer in the off-season was cut loose following the 2008 season and remains a free agent.

Blaine Boyer: Boyer embodied the youthful joy of the rookies when he, along with McCann, Francoeur and Johnson, got sunburned one August afternoon and showed up in the clubhouse an ugly shade of pink. Earlier this season, he was dealt to St. Louis and now plays for Arizona.

Joey Devine: Devine gave up grand slams in each of his first two appearances, the only major league pitcher to do so. He's now pitching for Oakland, though he's been out all of 2009 following elbow surgery.

Ryan Langerhans: Though he actually debuted for one game in 2002, Langerhans had a solid impact in his first full season in 2005. After stints with Oakland and Washington, he now plays for Seattle.

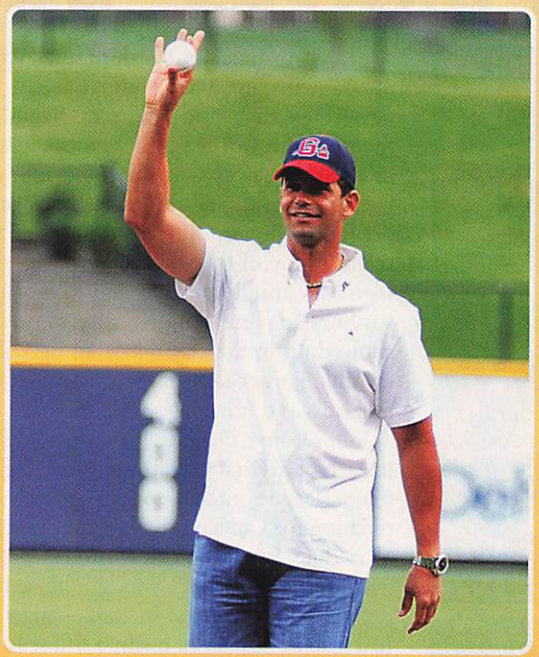
Wilson Betemit: Like Langerhans, Betemit's official debut came before 2005, but that season he established himself as an effective infielder. In 2006, he was dealt to the Dodgers. Earlier this year, the White Sox released him, and he's now a free agent.

Brayan Pena: A Cuban émigré who turned the Braves onto his childhood friend, Yunel Escobar, he now catches for Kansas City.

Pete Orr: An all-around utilityman, Orr quickly established himself as a favorite of Cox. After the 2007 season, he signed with Washington, and has been up and down between the Nats and their farm system.

And there were many more, guys such as Andy Marte (still trying to make it with Cleveland), Macay McBride (stuck in Detroit's farm system), and Anthony Lerew (Kansas City farm system), 18 rookies in all who helped vault the Braves to their 14th straight division title. Some are still in the majors, some have slid back to the minors, and some are out of baseball entirely. But for one year, they were part of a singular ballclub.

True, the Baby Braves didn't have staying power, but they did give Atlanta fans hope – hope that even as rotten as a season appears to be in July, there's always the possibility that kids you've never heard of will step up and carry your team to October.



MELINDA PEASE

FAMOUS FACES

THE GWINNETT BRAVES concluded their first season based in suburban Atlanta by making a trip to the International League playoffs. Even though they were eliminated in the first round of the playoffs, they used all the resources available to them in their new surroundings to put on a show for the fans at Gwinnett Stadium.

For their two home games of the best-of-five series against Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, the G-Braves called on one of the greatest pitchers and one of the greatest catchers in franchise history to throw out the ceremonial first pitches.

Hall of Fame knuckleball specialist Phil Niekro, who lives in nearby Flowery Branch, did the honors prior to Game 1 Sept. 9. One of the coaches for Scranton/Wilkes-Barre was Butch Wynegar, who was the catcher when Niekro won his 300th game as a Yankee in 1985.

Tremendously popular catcher Javy Lopez (L), who lives in Suwanee, even closer to the ballpark, threw out the pitch prior to Game 2 Sept. 10. However, Gwinnett still lost both games.

SURPRISE!

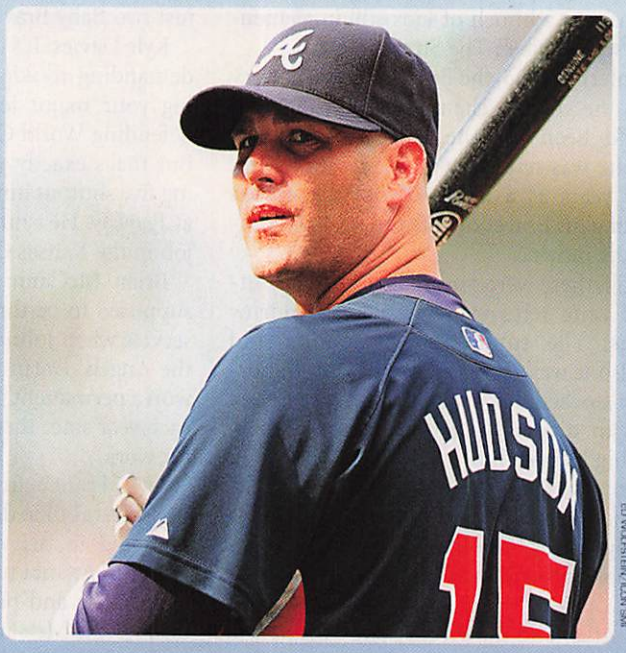
THE BRAVES thought they were getting a sixth starter when Tim Hudson (R) came off the disabled list Sept. 1. They had no idea they were getting a slugger, too.

Apparently, Hudson was taking some extra batting practice during his recovery from Tommy John surgery, because in his third start of the season, he hit the first home run of his 11-year big league career. It came Sept. 12 at St. Louis off Kyle Lohse in Hudson's 275th career at-bat - but just his fourth of the season.

Home runs by pitchers are one of the rarest of events anymore, especially since American League pitchers rarely bat due to the use of the designated hitter. The last home run by a Braves pitcher before Hudson's came almost exactly three years ago. Kyle Davies hit it on Sept. 13, 2006, off Randy Wolf, then with Philadelphia. It's still the last homer hit by a Braves pitcher at Turner Field.

There was a time when pitchers worked deeper into games, and thus had more chances to bat, when home runs by pitchers weren't quite as rare. The Braves have had some of the game's best hitting pitchers through the years, including Mike Hampton most recently (16 career home runs) and Warren Spahn, who holds the National League record for pitchers with 35 career homers, three fewer than the major league record of 38 by Wes Ferrell.

A lesser known Braves pitcher (but good enough to win 105 career games and make one All-Star team in 1944), Jim Tobin, ranks tied for 16th on the all-time list with 16 career homers and remains the only pitcher in modern history (post 1900) to hit three home runs in the same game (May 13, 1942).



ED WOLFSTEIN/ICON SMI

JAVIER VAZQUEZ

Favorite Movie	Thomas Crown Affair
Pancakes or Waffles	Pancakes
Pizza Topping	Pepperoni
Dream Vacation	Bora Bora
TV Show	Entourage
Favorite Dessert	Bananas foster
Most Admired Sports Figure	Roberto Clemente
Superman, Batman Or Spiderman	Spiderman
Best Birthday Gift	Watch
Furthest You've Been From Home	Japan

TAKE 10

MIKE GONZALEZ

Favorite Movie	Scarface
Pancakes or Waffles	Waffles
Pizza Topping	Pineapple & Canadian bacon
Dream Vacation	Spain
TV Show	Entourage
Dessert	German chocolate cake
Most Admired Sports Figure	Roberto Clemente
Superman, Batman Or Spiderman	Batman
Best Birthday Gift	Family came to Atlanta
Furthest You've Been From Home	Venezuela

WHAT ARE THOSE THINGS?

CATCHER'S KNEE SAVERS

ATLANTA BRAVES

ALTHOUGH HE is just 25 years old, Brian McCann has already caught well over 500 games in the major leagues. Crouching down on every pitch is tough on the knees. Equipment called "knee savers" make McCann's job somewhat easier.

The Easton Knee Saver by AliMed, which was invented in the early 1990s, is designed to relieve stress on catchers' knees caused by the constant squatting behind the plate. This product not only reduces fatigue, but research shows it lowers the risk of knee injuries.

The knee savers measure 7.5 inches long by 4.5 inches wide and get worn on each leg. They attach to a catcher's shin guards about halfway down his calves. When he crouches, the back of his thighs rest on top of them. Since they're made of lightweight material, knee savers don't inhibit the catcher's movements.

"The knee savers have a polyester material on the outside, a polyester fabric," said Tom Hoke, baseball/softball product manager for Easton. "Inside are various foams that provide the support and the cushion."

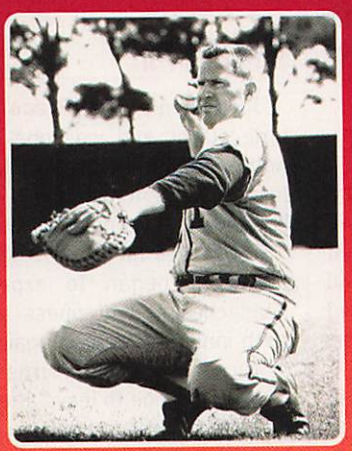
Knee savers minimize strain on the knee joint. This decreases the risk of injury, according to Hoke. They reduce pain for catchers who have had previous knee surgeries. For healthy catchers, they decrease the likelihood of future knee problems.

In addition to McCann, top catchers such as Joe Mauer and Bengie Molina also wear knee savers.

"Unless you're a catcher, you really don't know what they go through on a day to day basis, especially a major leaguer who plays a 162-game season," said Hoke. "That's a lot of time sitting in that position."

- STEVE FALL

DID YOU KNOW?



ONE OF THE most famous pitching duels in history was the 16-inning Braves-Giants game July 2, 1963 at Candlestick Park between 42-year-old Warren Spahn and 25-year-old Juan Marichal, two future Hall of Famers. Both pitchers went the distance, and Spahn lost, 1-0, when another future Hall of Famer, Willie Mays, hit his 201st pitch of the night for a home run. What is lost in history is the work of Braves Hall of Fame catcher Del Crandall (L), who caught all 201 of Spahn's pitches. It would be rare for a catcher to endure such a workload today, but if it happened, he'd likely get the next day off to rest. But not Crandall. He not only caught all 16 innings that day, but he also caught every inning of the next six games - including a doubleheader July 6! And the only way he got some rest was the All-Star break came on July 8. Crandall probably was glad that the last of his 11 All-Star Game selections came the previous season.

THE IVAN ALLEN JR. BRAVES MUSEUM HALL of FAME 1871 1953 1966

SEÑOR STRIKEOUT

JAVIER VAZQUEZ passed the 200-strikeout mark Sept. 8 at Houston and pitched his best game of the season Sept. 13 at St. Louis as he continued on the path of a career season. With three starts likely remaining, he still had a chance to become the first Braves starter in history to average 10 strikeouts per season. He was averaging 9.85 through his Sept. 13 performance in which he shut out the Cardinals on two hits through eight innings before giving up two runs in the ninth.

The 33-year-old Vazquez, who's suffered from a lack of run support all season, still won his 13th game at St. Louis, three off his career best in 2001. His 3.01 ERA at press time ranked 11th in the league and represented a career low.

When Vazquez notched his 200th strikeout, it was his third such season in a row and gave him five 200-strikeout seasons in his career. The only other active pitchers with at least five 200-strikeout seasons are **Randy Johnson** (13), **Pedro Martinez** (nine), and **John Smoltz** and **Johan Santana** (five apiece).

With 216 strikeouts in his first 29 starts, Vazquez had more strikeouts in a season than any Braves starter since Smoltz in 1997, and he could pass Smoltz's 241 by averaging over eight strikeouts in his last three starts. He ranked second in the league in strikeouts to **Tim Lincecum** (233), trailing the Giants' reigning Cy Young winner by just 17.

Vazquez was named NL Pitcher of the Week for the period ending Sept. 13 for his 2-0 record with a 1.13 ERA, .182 opponents' batting average, and 17 strikeouts in 16 innings. He will receive an engraved Swiss watch.

ATLANTA BRAVES

The Braves had scored 3 runs or less in 13 of Javier Lopez's 29 starts at press time, limiting his win total to 13 and leading Bobby Cox to proclaim he'd be a Cy Young candidate with better support.

BACK IN THE GAME

After six rehab starts (3.86 ERA), **Tim Hudson** made his much-anticipated return from **Tommy John** surgery Sept. 1 when he pitched an impressive 5 1/3 innings at Florida and received credit for the Braves' 4-3 victory. The 34-year-old righthander gave up two first-inning runs and then settled down, limiting Florida to six hits while striking out five, walking three, and throwing 82 pitches (52 strikes).

Hudson made his second start Sept. 6, holding Cincinnati to a run and four hits over seven innings (90 pitches/65 strikes) in a no decision, striking out six and walking only one. In his third start, Sept. 12 at St. Louis, Hudson worked five innings (71 pitches/48 strikes) in another no decision, giving up 10 hits and four runs with one walk and one strikeout.

To accommodate Hudson in the rotation, **Kenshin Kawakami** was moved to the bullpen. He made his first relief appearance Sept. 4 against Cincinnati, working a scoreless ninth inning in a 3-1 loss.

IN THE PARK

Peter Moylan has not allowed a home run in 84 appearances (through Sept. 13), dating to Opening Day 2008, when he gave up the walk-off solo shot to **Ryan Zimmerman** of the Nationals in a 3-2 loss. Moylan appeared in only six games last year before having season-ending Tommy John surgery. But this season he leads the majors in appearances, with 79 at press time, and still hasn't allowed a homer. He passed **John Smoltz** (76 in 2002-03) for the longest streak by an Atlanta Brave. He set a major league record Sept. 2 with his 75th straight appearance to start the season without giving up a home run.

CALLUPS & MOVES

Infielder **Brooks Conrad**, catcher **Clint Sammons** and right-handed reliever **Luis Valdez** were called up from Triple-A Gwinnett when major league rosters expanded to 40 players Sept. 1. **Tim Hudson** was activated the same day so he could make his first start since elbow surgery last Aug. 8.

Valdez's stay in Atlanta was short. He was optioned back to Gwinnett Sept. 6 to help the club during the International League playoffs. **Manny Acosta**, who was sent down Aug. 27, was recalled to replace Valdez in the Atlanta bullpen. **Vladimir Nunez**, another right-handed reliever, was called up from Gwinnett Sept. 5.

Nate McLouth (hamstring) went on the DL Aug. 17 (retroactive to Aug. 16) and was activated Sept. 4. **Reid Gorecki** was called up from Gwinnett to give the Braves another outfielder. When Acosta was optioned to Triple A Aug. 27, Buddy Carlyle was recalled from Gwinnett.

A REAL PAIN

Just when **Martin Prado** became a full-time player and was one of the Braves' hottest hitters, he was sidelined by a mysterious ailment diagnosed as "exertional headaches" by a neurosurgeon.

Prado was hitting .310 through Aug. 15 when he began to experience sharp headaches and dizziness and left in the sixth inning of a game against the Phillies at Turner Field. He returned to the lineup Aug. 18 but had to leave after a half-inning of the first game of a series with the Mets in New York. He flew back to Atlanta where he was examined by a neurosurgeon.

Prado began to take anti-inflammation medication and was able to avoid a stint on the disabled list. He returned to the regular lineup Aug. 25, however, he had not yet regained his hot hand at the plate and was hitting just .178 through the first two weeks of September.

ATLANTA BRAVES

Prior to the onset of exertional headaches Aug. 15, Martin Prado batted .337 over his previous 39 games and helped the Braves go 24-15 to work themselves into the wild card race.

SHORT HOPS

- On Sept. 12, **Chipper Jones** had his first multi-hit game since Aug. 27 but he sustained a strained left groin and had to miss the next day's game.
- **Jair Jurrjens** shut out St. Louis on 6 hits over 8 innings, and **Rafael Soriano** pitched a perfect ninth to preserve a 1-0 victory Sept. 11. It was Jurrjens' 30th start of the season, and he has allowed two runs or less in 22 of those.
- **Nate McLouth** came off the disabled list (hamstring) Sept. 4 and hit a home run on the first pitch he saw. Unfortunately, it was the only run the Braves scored in a 3-1 loss to Cincinnati.
- Since the start of the 2007 season through Aug. 31, **Omar Infante** led all major league hitters with a .370 batting average with runners in scoring position (min. 150 opportunities).
- **Chipper Jones**, **Yunel Escobar** and **Brian McCann** are the Braves' nominees for this year's **Hank Aaron** Award. The award is presented annually to the best overall hitter in each league. Each club has three nominees.

FRANK WREN
GENERAL MANAGER

OUR PITCHING KEEPS ON DOING AN AMAZING JOB

WE JUST HAD A GREAT WEEKEND in St. Louis. Realistically, it may be too late, but technically, it's not. We'll just have to see what happens during the last three weeks.

If we play well enough and the Phillies have trouble, and if we play well enough against them, a lot of things can happen. We're in almost the same place as the Phillies were two years ago when they caught the Mets - seven and a half games back with 20 to play. So, it's not like things like that haven't happened before.

The two losses in Florida (Sept. 2-3) really took a lot out of us. We came home after that and just couldn't get it going with the bats. We couldn't get the big hit against Cincinnati and lost three. That created a five-game stretch where we lost a lot of ground that we just couldn't afford to lose at that point.

The pitching has just continued to do an amazing job, though. That's one of the things that's so exciting about the future. You look at what some of these guys are doing at such a young age, and you can project that they'll get even better.

It was great to see Tim Hudson come back so strong from surgery. It's always a bit of a question when guys come back from Tommy John. You don't know exactly how their arm will respond to the workload. There are questions about command and how crisp the stuff will be. But Hudson is ahead of the curve. He doesn't feel he's where he wants to be, but for his first three starts after surgery, he's doing very well.

With six starters, it gives us the opportunity to rest some of the young guys, depending on how the last three weeks of the season go. We don't necessarily have limits, but there are areas - innings-wise - where we'd rather not go with the young guys. We're not in danger of going beyond those areas, but we'd rather err on the side of caution, and we can do that since we have an extra starter.

> "I DON'T SEE ANY REASON WHY CHIPPER CAN'T BOUNCE BACK AND SWING THE BAT AS WELL AS HE ALWAYS HAS."

We'll have a lot of decisions this winter about the best way to build the club. We'll determine our strengths and weaknesses and see what area we can trade from to get the necessary pieces.

I really don't know what's wrong with Chipper at this point. It's one of those situations where a guy starts to struggle - something we haven't really seen out of Chipper - and it snowballs at times. It's been more extended that I'm sure he'd like or any of us would like. I still think he's too good of a hitter not to come out of it, and physically he's fine, other than the little things everyone has this time of year from playing so many games and being banged up.

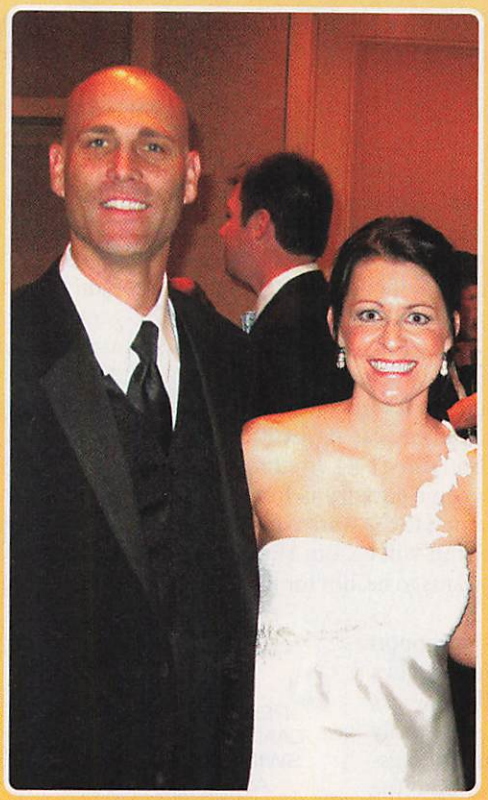
I don't see any reason why Chipper can't bounce back and swing the bat as well as he always has. There's nothing physically to keep him from doing that. He's doing everything he can to experiment and try to get a better feel at the plate. I know his play at third base has been difficult for him, too, because he's accustomed - and we're accustomed - to him playing good in the field. He should have won the Gold Glove two years ago when David Wright won it.

We all felt Jordan Schafer was ready this spring, and he got off to a rousing start and performed well, which may have worked against him.

Jordan just had surgery on his hand - not his wrist - and he'll be in a cast from shoulder to fingertip for six weeks and then a shorter cast, from forearm to the base of his hand, for another six weeks. He'll be in a cast almost to Christmas.

He had a chronic condition that's most prevalent in hitters and golfers. They fused together two little bones to prevent the pain and inflammation. It will not limit him in the future. He'll miss a lot of his off-season work, but he can start rehab at the end of December or early January and be ready for spring training.

VOTE FOR HUDSON NOW!



PATTY RASMUSSEN

Tim Hudson, with his wife, Kim, at last year's Celebration of Wishes Gala benefiting the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Alabama and Georgia, is the Braves' nominee for the Roberto Clemente Award for the fourth straight year and could become the fourth Brave to win the prestigious honor for community service.

THE DEADLINE for voting for the 2009 **Roberto Clemente** Award is Oct. 4, so be sure to visit chevy.com/clemente to support **Tim Hudson** for this prestigious honor. Hudson is the Braves' Clemente nominee for the fourth straight year (and eighth time overall). Each team nominates one player who combines exceptional performance on the field with devoted work in the community.

The award is named for Clemente, a 12-time All-Star and a Hall of Famer who died on New Year's Eve 1972 in a plane crash while attempting to deliver supplies to earthquake victims in Nicaragua.

Hudson and his wife, **Kim**, founded the Hudson Family Foundation this year, a non-profit organization dedicated to making a positive impact in the lives of children who have a need for assistance with regard to a physical, emotional or financial circumstance.

The Hudsons are ambassadors for the Make-A-Wish Foundation, and co-chairs of the annual Celebration of Wishes Gala each November. In December, they invite children from the Make-A-Wish Foundation to participate in a shopping spree and holiday party at Toys R Us. Tim works tirelessly to support Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Pediatric Hospital. Each spring training, he and Kim host the Birdies & Baseball Celebrity Amateur golf tournament, and in August, he joins with teammates to host the annual Braves Celebrity Am Golf Tournament to benefit Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. The Hudsons also have joined with The (Jamie) Moyer Foundation to support Camp Erin, a bereavement camp designed for children ages 6-17 who have experienced the death of a parent, friend or loved one. They spearheaded the effort to establish Camp Erin Atlanta, which hosted its first camp in April.

Hudson actively supports several other charities in the Atlanta area, including: The Atlanta Braves Foundation, Anna's Angel Fund, CURE Childhood Cancer, and the Georgia Transplant Foundation.

The winner of the fan poll will receive one vote to be counted with those cast by the official selection panel. Participating fans automatically will be registered for a chance to win a trip to Game 3 of the 2009 World Series.

Three Braves have won the Clemente - **Phil Niekro** (1980), **Dale Murphy** (1988) and **John Smoltz** (2005).

HANK & TED

The Georgia governor and the Georgia Historical Society (GHS) will honor **Hank Aaron** and former Braves owner **Ted Turner** as new Georgia Trustees at GHS' Georgia Days Birthday Bash and Awards Gala, in Savannah on Saturday, Feb. 13. Aaron and Turner are being recognized for their historic achievements, philanthropic contributions, and community service. According to **W. Todd Groce**, GHS president and CEO, this is "the highest honor Georgia can bestow on its citizens."

The original Georgia Trustees was a governing body chartered and appointed by His Majesty King George II of England in 1732 to establish a new colony in North America that founded the Georgia colony. They established and governed the colony until their disbandment in 1752. The governor will make an annual appointment of new trustees whose accomplishments and service reflect the original trustees' ideals. The names of Aaron and Turner will be placed on the roll with the original trustees from 1732.

The Georgia Historical Society's annual Georgia Days Birthday Bash and Awards Gala will take place on the Riverfront in Downtown Savannah and will include dinner, dancing, and a discussion with Aaron and Turner. For ticket information, call (912) 651-2125. Visit georgiahistory.com for more information.

AT THE MOVIES

The documentary titled "A Braves New World" and produced by **Bill Povletich** will be among the 13 titles featured in the fourth annual Hall of Fame Film Festival in Cooperstown the weekend of Oct. 2-4. "A Braves New World" (55 min.) will be shown Saturday, Oct. 3, at 3:30 p.m. It chronicles how the success the Braves enjoyed at the gate in their early years in Milwaukee began baseball's shift westward. Seldom-seen archival footage and photos are featured, along with over 25 on-camera interviews, including former Braves players, management and sportswriters such as ChopTalk editor/publisher **Gary Caruso**. Three awards will be given: Best Film Award,

Award for Baseball Excellence, and Award for Film Making Excellence. Tickets for the screenings are free but are limited and must be reserved. Any available seats will made available to the general public beginning Sept. 28, by calling (607) 547-0397.

EAT HEALTHY

The Braves and ARAMARK opened a gluten-free concession stand at Turner Field Sept. 4 for fans with Celiac Disease. The stand is located behind Section 106, and features all-beef franks, sirloin beef burgers, chicken sandwiches, chips, popcorn, brownies, cookies, soda, water and gluten-free RedBridge beer.

YEE HAW!

The city of Fort Scott, Kansas has already sold hundreds of tickets for the Nov. 7 "Ropin' and Rockin' for Pennies for the Park," an all-day event combining a rodeo competition and concert with country rocker **Jason Aldean**. The event is hosted by **Adam LaRoche** and his wife, **Jenn**, who make their home in Fort Scott. Funds raised from the event will benefit a family oriented venue for area youth that will be built at a renovated park. The roping competition begins at 9:30 a.m., and the concert begins at 7 p.m. General admission tickets are $25 in advance and $35 at the gate on the day of the event. For more information, contact the Fort Scott Chamber of Commerce at (620) 223-3566 or visit yatftscott.com.

BALLS & STRIKES

- The third and final Bark in the Park of the season was held Sept. 6.
- The Braves held their first Lawn & Garden Night presented by The Home Depot and Scotts on Sept. 19.
- The Braves honored those who have battled breast cancer on Sept. 19, with "Breast Cancer Awareness Day" presented by Publix and in partnership with American Cancer Society's Making Strides for Breast Cancer.
- The Braves hosted a job fair for students to find out about the Braves Trainee program on Sept. 19 at Turner Field. The trainee program is designed for recent college graduates interested in a career in pro sports.

BOBBY COX

MANAGER

WE ARE EXCITED TO SEE HUDSON PITCH SO WELL

THE BASEBALL SEASON is so long that there is plenty of time for ups and downs, twists and turns. We've seen a lot of them. There were times when maybe the fans felt the team was out of it for sure, but then we'd put together some wins and get right back in the race.

One thing is for sure, we've seen plenty of good pitching and defense. Frank Wren did an outstanding job of putting together this team, even if it's not the same team we started with. When he needed to, he found pieces to help us win.

I know there have been disappointments, as well, but we're excited about the future. There are players that got a chance to play every day and have shown they are capable.

It was exciting to have Tim Hudson come back and pitch so well after surgery just a year ago. We felt comfortable enough about his ability to start that we felt it was a good idea to move Kenshin Kawakami to the bullpen. Kawakami's been a great asset to our pitching staff.

Huddy looked real sharp in his starts. He worked really hard to be able to come back in time to help us play meaningful games in September. Everyone was pulling for him. He's a great guy, well-liked, and he'll do anything to help his team. It was great to see him come back and do well.

There's definitely a protocol with handling young pitchers, or any pitcher. It's called "common sense." Managers have always gotten second-guessed about the way they handle pitchers, how long they leave them in, or when they take them out. It's part of the job. I don't think about what people are going to say if I make the wrong decision. I know whatever I do, someone isn't going to be happy!

> "I'D RATHER USE COMMON SENSE WHEN I'M DEALING WITH PITCHERS. I'M NOT JUST LOOKING AT A NUMBER."

For example, I took Tommy Hanson out of the game versus the Astros on (Sept. 9) after he'd thrown eight innings and 98 pitches. There's a very good chance he could have gone back out and been fine. He wanted to pitch. But Roger McDowell and I talked it over and came to the decision that we'd take him out and let our closer, Rafael Soriano, take over. He'd been lights out. Instead, he gave up a couple of hits and the ballgame was over.

Maybe if Tommy had gone back in, he would have been fine, or maybe he would have gone out and had trouble. Then your closer has to come in, and you always want him coming in with a clean inning - no guys on base. You want to win the game, but you have to use common sense and think about all the other variables.

Tommy's thrown a lot of pitches this year, but the number of pitches isn't the only thing we look at as an organization. At every level, we watch the percentage of innings pitchers have in a year. I'd rather use common sense when I'm dealing with pitchers. I'm not just looking at a number. I'm looking at the situation, and I'm always willing to stand by the decisions I make.

October is a busy month for every organization. It's time to evaluate where you stand.

The coaches have their meeting at the end of September. We evaluate the players - we look at everything, strengths, weaknesses, stats, and we get all that information together so I can take it to the organizational meeting in October.

This is done after the season ends. Everyone meets - the general manager, the scouts, and the manager. We go over every player. We discuss free agents that are available. We look at the team's strengths and weaknesses, and the information from the coaches meeting about the individual players.

From there, we develop the strategy that will guide the off-season.

PLAYING PEPPER

ADAM LaROCHE

The Braves reacquired LaRoche from the Red Sox at the July 31 trading deadline in exchange for Casey Kotchman, only nine days after Pittsburgh traded LaRoche to Boston July 22.

ATLANTA BRAVES

INTERVIEW BY
PATTY RASMUSSEN

CHOPTALK: You had a little trouble with your right hip. Has that ever happened before, and how are you feeling now?

ADAM LaROCHE: No, I never had any trouble. It felt like my hip was out of the socket, as if it needed to be popped back in place, which wasn't the case. I ended up getting two or three days of hard treatment - ultrasound, heat and deep tissue massage. It feels really good now. I don't know if it was a nerve getting pinched or a strained muscle. It happened when I was running and then again when I slid really hard on my side. It's not 100 percent. I can feel it a little, but nothing like it felt, and I can tell it's getting better every day.

CT: So, being back in Atlanta is good, right?

LaROCHE: Yeah, I'm very happy to be back, and not just because it's Atlanta or because I've played here, but because I'm having meaningful at-bats and some meaningful games again, which we were not lucky enough to have in Pittsburgh. The three years I was there, I went through three years of guys getting traded. It seemed like every year we'd have five core guys leaving the clubhouse, all part of their rebuilding plan. But for a guy like me who doesn't have 15 more years to play, it was tough to watch.

CT: You were pretty outspoken in Pittsburgh earlier in the season when they traded Nate McLouth to Atlanta. That was a departure for you, being that outspoken.

LaROCHE: When Nate went, a couple of us let (the front office) know we weren't real happy. When Nyjer Morgan and Sean Burnett went, we questioned it again in a respectful way. I don't know how it came across, but I feel like we had every right to do that.... It wasn't a slap in their face, just something that needed to be done. For the most part, I prefer to calm things down, not stir things up.

CT: You'll be a free agent for the first time at the end of the season. Do you have any expectations of staying in Atlanta, or is everything wide open? Do you and your wife, Jenn, have a list of places you'd like to play?

LaROCHE: It's pretty wide open. Obviously, if I have a choice, Atlanta will be way up there, and I would love the opportunity (I've been on one-year deals my whole career) to sign something extended so my family can settle in and we can get comfortable for more than a year. I haven't been approached, so we'll see what the off-season brings. A lot will depend on what the market is like. Last year, it was bad for free agents, and it could happen again this year. A lot of guys ended up having to take shorter deals than they wanted. I honestly haven't thought about it, intentionally. I haven't made a list. I'm going to wait until the end of the season when I can sit down with Jenn and look at our options.

> "I'M VERY HAPPY TO BE BACK... BECAUSE I'M HAVING MEANINGFUL AT-BATS AND SOME MEANINGFUL GAMES AGAIN."

CT: You had a whirlwind summer, being traded from Pittsburgh to Boston and then to Atlanta. It must have been cool to know Atlanta wanted you because they believed you would bring some power to the lineup. Did you know that they were looking to get you back to Atlanta?

LaROCHE: I did. About an hour before the deal with Boston went through, I heard that Atlanta was in the running with Boston and San Francisco. For whatever reason, Pittsburgh liked the Boston deal better. I knew Frank Wren was serious at that time, but I really knew it a week later when I was told in Boston that I was coming here! I'm really lucky. You have zero control over where you go for a long time. I could have gone to San Francisco or San Diego or somewhere else. First off, I went to Boston and I wouldn't trade that week for anything. I had a blast. It's an unbelievable organization. The fans are unreal. But then to get called in, that I'd been traded back home to Atlanta. That was great. Usually when you leave Boston, it's not a good feeling because they are really good. So I could easily have come out of that meeting irritated, not liking where I was going. But it was Atlanta.

CT: You were only teammates with Jon Lester (in Boston) for one week. How did you come to be living in his house in Peachtree City (just south of Turner Field)?

LaROCHE: I have no idea! We played golf one day. We talked hunting. He's an awesome guy, and we got to know each other. I didn't even know he had a house (in the Atlanta area) until I was traded. I was standing in my street clothes about to leave, and he came up said, "Hey, you're welcome to live in my house in Peachtree City." He started explaining where it was, that he lived there in the off-season, and I

said, "Oh I appreciate it." He said, "I'm not just saying this to say it. I'm dead serious. No one is staying there, and it would be nice to have someone there looking after it." I called him two days later and said, "Hey, where are the keys? We're moving in." It was very nice of him.

CT: He has some ponds on the property, is that right?

LaROCHE: Yes, he's got a couple of stocked ponds on the property. Drake (son) and I have been testing that out about every morning. We've been doing pretty well - caught some bass and throwing them back.

CT: In addition to the Buck Commander business (deer hunting videos), you and Chipper bought some property in western Kansas.

LaROCHE: It's right on the border. Some of it's in Kansas, but most of it is in Oklahoma. It's a famous piece of land. The last seven years or so, it's gotten a reputation for having big white tail deer. It's funny, because we had never seen it. We had heard about it and seen video footage, talked to guys who'd been on it, but over the All-Star break, we had the chance to spend a day on the property and make sure it was the right piece, and we ended up getting it. This is great for us, not just because we like to hunt, but with Buck Commander, this gives us another place to go film and to film some really good deer. And we can bring some other guys out, friends and other guys from the company.

CT: What's your involvement with Buck Commander?

LaROCHE: I don't know why it's taken off the way it has. The region we're in has a lot of rednecks...

CT: You mean here in the Southeast? Or are you talking about Kansas and Texas (where LaRoche and Jones own property)?

LaROCHE: Yeah, and there are plenty of rednecks in Kansas and Texas, too! Seriously, this region of the country has a lot of guys who love to hunt, love to be outdoors, and Chipper being an owner, his name, gives us instant credibility when we call ESPN or an outdoor channel and say, this is what we need. They're more willing to listen because of the guys we have. The best part about it, though, is that viewers see another side, our true personality, away from the ballpark. There's nothing special or famous about us at all. We're like every other guy going to deer camp. Yeah, sometimes we kill some big deer, and sometimes we don't get anything. Regardless, we have fun. The reviews we've gotten back, people say, "It's refreshing to see a group of guys who go out and hunt like they do." I have a big fifth wheel RV that I pull. We pack guys into it, eat food off the campfire... it's not a big luxurious outfit. We started it three years ago, just to make a DVD to see how it did. It took off, and now our TV show is on (ESPN2). It's come a long way. The scenes that fans like the best are the screwups that happen that would happen at their own camp. We wanted it to be real. Show when we get a deer, but show the misses, too.

CT: You've also added more property to your ranch in Kansas, the E3 Ranch (Mar. 2006 CT). Do you have any other plans? Don't you and (former Brave) Ryan Langerhans have a cattle operation?

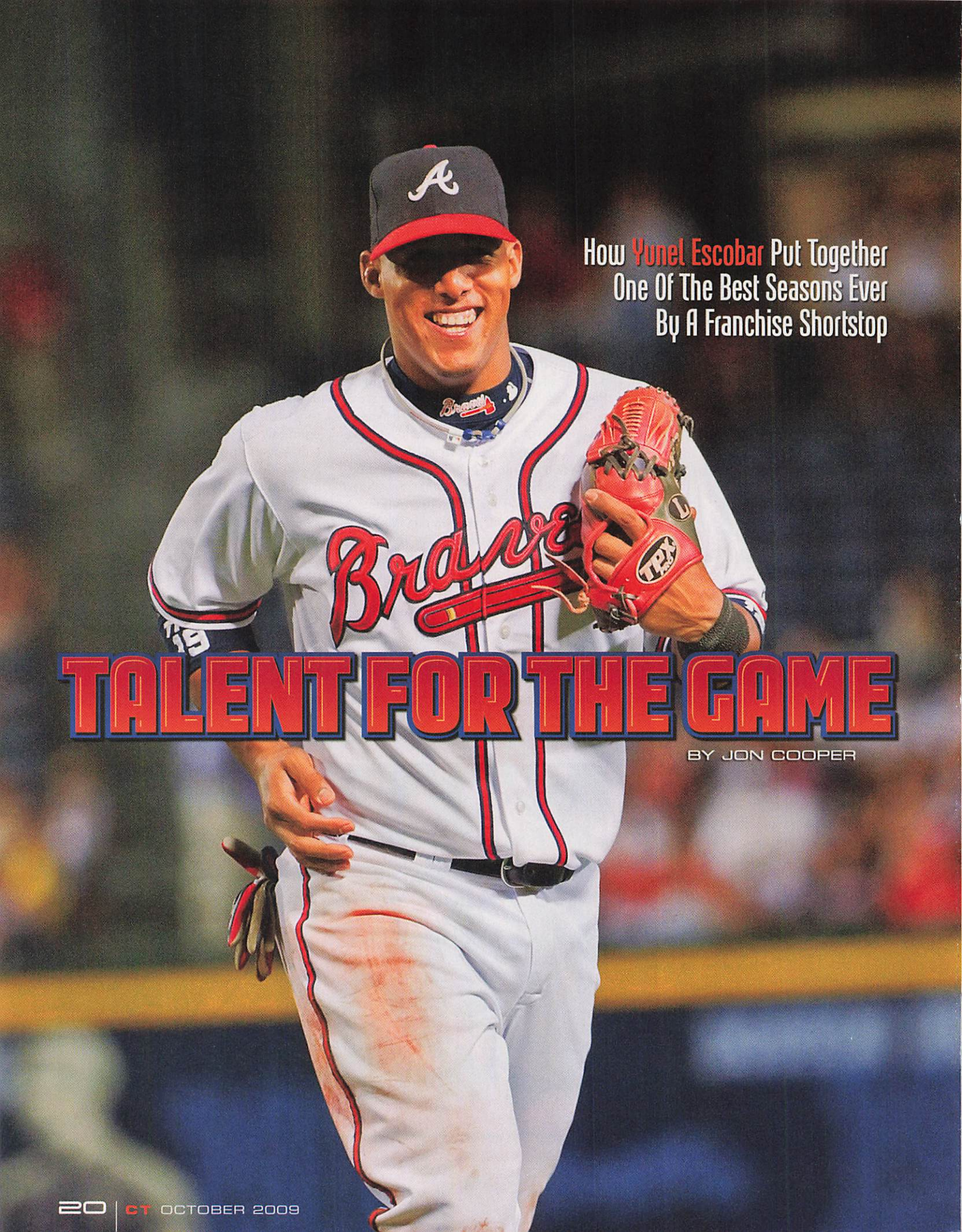
LaROCHE: We do. We run about 250 head of Black Angus, beef cattle, on my property. We do it for two reasons - to help pay for some of the ranch, but also to keep deer away from the outside of the ranch, to keep them off the roads. It's a side business that's part of the E3 Ranch. We have a Missouri ranch that's about two miles away from the Kansas ranch. I haven't named it yet.

CT: How are your children (son) Drake, 7, and (daughter) Montana, 6?

LaROCHE: Drake is all boy. He wants to spend every second of his life on the ranch. He has a little .22 rifle now. He's definitely an outdoorsman. He likes to play sports, but he's seasonal, like me. He'll play soccer and baseball, but when it's time to hunt, he wants out there. I'm loving it, because he's old enough to sit in the deer stand with me. He's old enough to come to the field and hit in the cage with me. Montana, on the other hand... I've tried taking her fishing four or fives times, and we get about two minutes into it, and either her pole is in the water or she has a bird's nest of fishing line, lures up in the tree. It's amazing. She has a knack for screwing it up. I tried again a couple days ago. Let's just say she's going to be a project. She probably needs to stick to the ballet and cheerleading.

ATLANTA BRAVES

The Braves acquired LaRoche with the hope that he'd provide more power than Casey Kotchman, and he did just that, hitting 8 home runs in August alone.



How Yunel Escobar Put Together One Of The Best Seasons Ever By A Franchise Shortstop

TALENT FOR THE GAME

BY JON COOPER

Putting Yunel Escobar into words isn't easy.

On the field, the 26-year-old native of Havana, Cuba, has such a remarkable skill set, both at bat and in the field, that people sometimes struggle to find the proper superlatives. In the clubhouse, his sometimes charming, sometimes puzzling, and often misunderstood behavior occasionally is a struggle to explain.

"He's one of the best defensive shortstops in the game," said Chipper Jones. "Offensively, I love his discipline at the plate. He's willing to go up there and take a walk. He hits mistakes for homers and doubles. He hits good with the game on the line and with runners in scoring position, which is something that is rare for young players. He hits the ball to all fields. He'll hit the ball from foul line to foul line. Those are the hardest players to defend."

"He's got every tool there is," said Matt Diaz. "He's got great range at shortstop, he's got one of the best arms in the game as a shortstop, he can hit for average, can hit for power. The sky's the limit with him, and it's going to be interesting to see... it's going to be fun to see where it goes."

As he finishes his second full major league season (third overall), Escobar has carved a niche for himself as one the most reliable clutch hitters in baseball.

Through Sept. 8, Escobar was hitting .400 with runners in scoring position and .364 with runners in scoring position and two outs.

"Most of it is just preparation, and maybe it's a little more willingness to do well with men on base," he said. "I've been lucky and fortunate to be able to do that the whole year."

Atlanta has been equally lucky to have the luxury of plugging him into whatever hole in the batting order needs filling. Escobar, who leads the team with 134 hits and 38 multi-hit games, has hit in each of the top six spots in the order, hitting near or over .300 in four of them and especially prospering in the second (.297), third (.313), fifth (.311) and sixth (.364) spots.

"Hitting-wise, I try to constantly make adjustments as I go along," he said. "Experience has probably been the biggest factor in my improvement, just being in the big leagues and seeing the pitchers a few more times. I'm a little more experienced in how they're going to work me."

Escobar started the season batting second, where he hit .297 with seven home runs and 36 RBIs in 55 games. In the three games he hit in the leadoff spot, he batted a forgettable 1-for-12 (.091).

At the end of June, with the acquisition of Nate McLouth, the ascension of Martin Prado, and the need for a productive right-handed bat in the middle of the order, Bobby Cox moved Escobar down, batting him fifth or sixth. The move was an unqualified success. Escobar has hit over .300 batting fifth and over .350 hitting sixth. He has 51 hits, has driven in 23 runs and scored 23 more since being moved down.

"When you hit .400 with runners in scoring position, you're going to get moved down in the lineup," said Jones. "It's not a demotion. It's a compliment that we need to get him more opportunities with runners in scoring position. If you put him behind the best on-base percentage guys on the club, he's going to get a lot of opportunities. So that was the reasoning for the move. He did great in the two-hole. He was willing to bunt, hit behind runners, because he understands how the game is played, and he plays it the way you should. He can hit in either spot and flourish in both."

Escobar has made himself right at home and is enjoying driving in runs.

"I've probably got a little more time to prepare hitting fifth in the lineup than I did hitting second, because I'm able to see the pitcher work the first four hitters," he said. "I love to be in RBI situations and hope I keep on coming through with men on base."

Through the first week of September, Escobar was on pace to hit .302, with 16 homers and 77 RBIs. While none of those numbers would set single-season highs for Atlanta shortstops, the combination would give him arguably the most balanced offensive season for a shortstop in Braves history. He's already the first Braves shortstop to drive in 60 or more runs in consecutive seasons since Johnny Logan did it three straight years (1953-55).

Defensively, he is fielding at a .974 clip, 10th in the majors, and his 12 errors rank 11th. Jones is impressed by Escobar's tremendous range, which has led to 490 chances (ninth-most) and a 4.53 range factor (putouts plus assists divided by nine innings), fifth-best in the majors.

"He's made some silly errors, just because he probably gets to more balls than most people," said Jones. "As I get older, I don't cover as much ground as I used to, and it's not a big deal because he's in my hip pocket. If I don't get there, nine times out of 10, he will. So, him being able to cover that much ground, being able to not only cover it, but to be able to make the kind of throws that a shortstop needs to be able to make from deep in the hole, he has a tremendous arm. All those things help him be an elite defender."

Escobar has earned just as much praise for the way he's changing his perception in the court of public opinion.

The days of glaring at the official scorer after being given an error or openly showing his displeasure at umpires appear to be over (although he is still quite animated when trying to plead his case on check swings).

"I don't think he's letting the umpires get to him as much these days," said Brian McCann. "When he first came up, a bad call on him would affect his at-bat. I think he's grown a lot in that sense, and as an overall teammate, he's been great.

"He's a guy that plays with a lot of passion, with a lot of energy," McCann continued. "Sometimes that might get mistaken for playing the game in a cocky way. But he plays the game so hard - that's all you can ask for."

"On the field, he's a lot more focused it seems on every play," said Diaz. "Early in the year, he had a couple of plays where mentally he took off and people crucified him for that. But we all have those moments. He's done a good job of making sure that it hasn't happened again. I can't remember the last time he did it. So he's had an extreme stretch here of great focus and done a great job of helping us win."

Escobar has re-channeled his energy and is no longer doing things that can draw

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

SHORT STUFF

Yunel Escobar set personal bests for home runs and RBIs this year, and his production was on pace to be one of the best all-around offensive seasons for a Braves shortstop. Below are Escobar's projected hitting stats for 2009 and how they would stack up against the best seasons by Braves shortstops.

	AGE	YEAR	AVG	HR	RBI
YUNEL ESCOBAR	26	2009*	.302	16	77
EDGAR RENTERIA	31	2007	.322	12	57
DENIS MENKE	23	1964	.263	20#	65
JOHNNY LOGAN	28	1955	.297	13	83

* Projected; # Franchise shortstop season record

IF I START OR RELIEVE DOESN'T MATTER TO ME

THIS SEASON has gone by really fast. The first month in Gwinnett I was doing well, and whenever you're doing well, it seems like time flies. Then, all of a sudden, I was up here in Atlanta. Switching roles, too, made things go by fast.

I started in spring training as a reliever, then went to Gwinnett and started, and came up here starting - but in the back of my mind knowing it wouldn't last too long. I had an idea I would go to the 'pen when Tommy (Hanson) was called up, and we knew it would happen eventually.

The relieving thing has gotten in my blood. As a reliever, it's harder to use all your pitches. You have to establish your fastball and throw strikes. It's hard to do that using all four pitches. Starting gave me a chance to use my change-up a lot, and it's become my go-to pitch.

The biggest difference between the big leagues and minor leagues is probably the work ethic. The skill level in the major leagues is high, but there are guys (in the minors) who can hit the ball as far or further than some of the guys in the majors. Down there, I think you can get by on talent. But up here, everyone is talented, and it's the work ethic that makes the difference.

If they ask you to pitch three days in a row, it doesn't matter. I want to be in there when the game matters, and I was put in that situation (Sept. 1-3 at Florida). I thought, "Wow, three days in a row. I've never done this before. I'm going to find out if I can."

I felt good in the 'pen, but when I got in there, my pitches came out a little flat. (Brian) McCann said, "When you pitch in relief like that, you're stuff is going to be a little different. You have to learn how to deal with it." It was my first time, and hopefully there will be other times.

> "THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE BIG LEAGUES AND MINOR LEAGUES IS PROBABLY THE WORK ETHIC."

I honestly don't have a preference between starting and relieving. I like pitching. I'm a versatile guy, and I just want to be in a position to help my team. I want the guys to trust me with that job.

When I was first up, I doubted myself. The transition to the Atlanta Braves was mental, all mental. It was a shock, especially coming up as a starter. I always expected to be called up as a reliever, because it's what I've done.

My outing in Los Angeles was the biggest, best experience for me, because I grew up there going to Dodger games. I probably had 35 people there, family and buddies from high school. I got to pitch two days in a row, both pretty big situations, and I was on. I struck out Manny Ramirez and was like, "You've got to be kidding me, right?" It was just a cool experience, and I felt completely at home on the mound.

It was the opposite of my debut. Now that I see how starters get ready, I can see how I set myself up (for trouble). Normally, starters are still throwing after the national anthem, but I was ready to go five to 10 minutes before the anthem. Roger McDowell looked at me and said, "Slow down."

That day went by like that. I was not feeling it at all. I threw two wild pitches, one of them in the other batter's box. That had never happened to me before. It was a type of nerves I've never felt.

I went through the whole first half questioning my ability. Then I got a spot start in Colorado when Javy Vazquez hurt his abdominal muscle and David Ross was catching. I gave up a home run and then went 1-2-3, then gave up another home run and went 1-2-3. Ross yelled at me in the dugout and said, "You don't have to be such a baby! You don't have to give up a run to go out there and show you can get dirty!" I sat there and thought, "He's right."

The second half took off after that, and I had a "hit it if you can" attitude. Ross getting in my face helped a lot.

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

negative attention. He's stopped doing his signature knees-to-chest jump before coming up to the plate. He learned that lesson the hard way after straining an abdominal muscle doing the jump April 16.

"I've always been energetic," he said. "The reason I quit jumping and doing that stuff was because I got hurt early in the year, and I didn't want to take a chance of getting hurt doing that. But I'm still the same guy."

It's part of what makes Escobar a special player, and it endears him to his teammates.

"He enjoys baseball. It's still a game to him, kind of like the sandlot version of the baseball game you used to play as a kid in your neighborhood with your buddies," said Kelly Johnson. "That's the way he comes to the field every day. It's a little bit about the show and a little bit about being flashy. It can be taken the wrong way, and there is a time and a place for it. You don't want to lose the enthusiasm, because that's what gets him going and gets him excited to play."

The final but most daunting hurdle for Escobar is breaking down the language barrier, something that's still a work in progress.

"It's not that he's afraid to talk in English, but he was always very hesitant about making mistakes," said bench coach and Cuban countryman Chino Cadahia. "So, it was hard for him to approach teammates because of his fear of saying something wrong. We have made it kind of easer for him, guys like Eddie [Perez], myself, who are bilingual, plus the teammates he has here who can speak both languages (especially Mike Gonzalez and Nate McLouth). He's more outgoing, and it's a lot easier for him to get along."

"It seems as though this season he's made a conscious effort to start picking up some English," added Diaz. "I have had a lot more conversations with him in English this year than ever in the past. I'd always tried to speak in Spanish to him. He'd teach me some Spanish, and I'd teach him some English. But this year he's really started to seem to make an effort to speak in English to everybody."

Improved communication will help keep Escobar on the road to getting along and being better received by fans, and he realizes that and is addressing it.

"I'm in a program [taking classes] now, and hopefully in the very near future, I don't know when, I won't have to use [Chino] as a translator.

- Chino Cadahia served as translator for this story.

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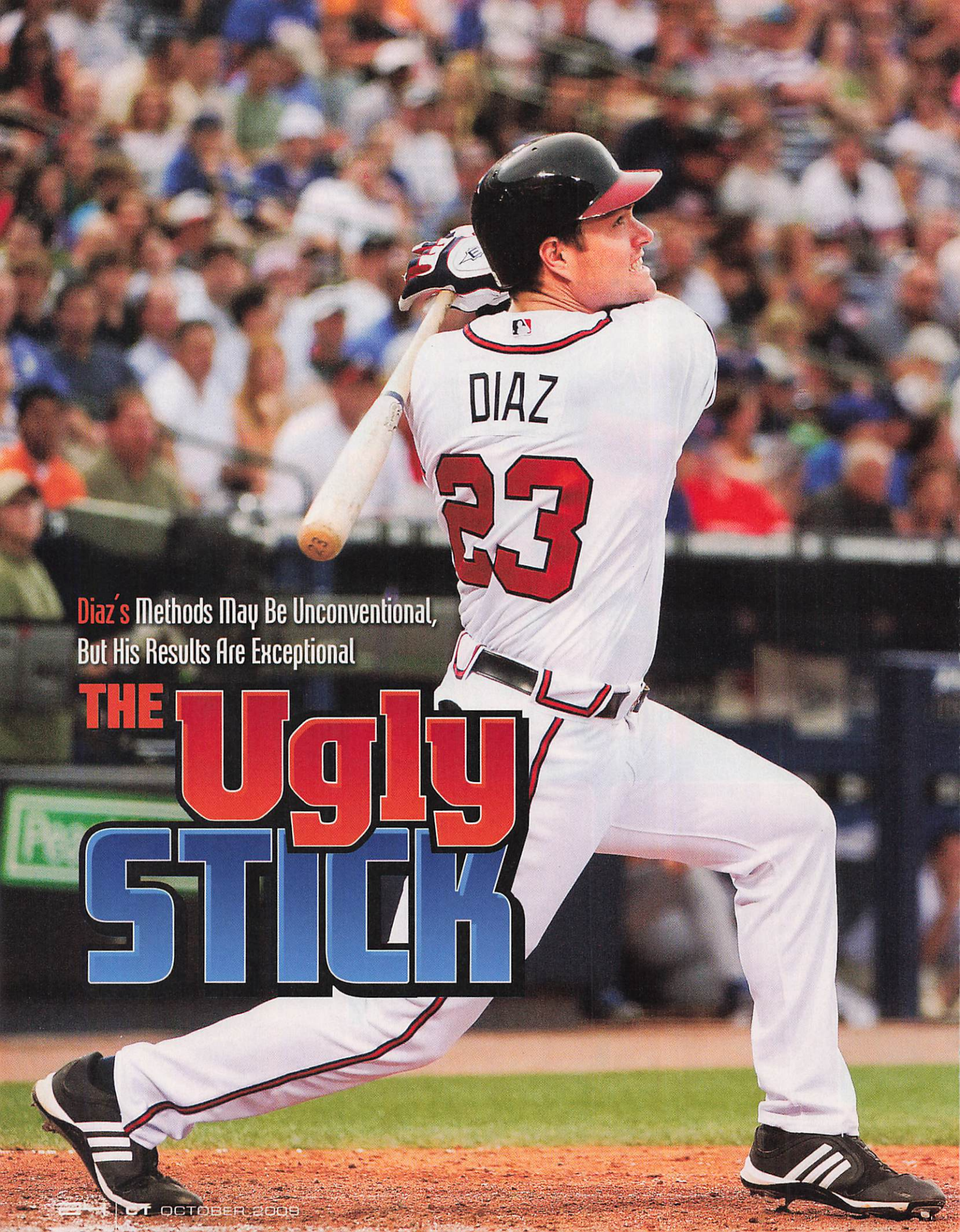
August 2005	Johnson & Langerhans
September 2005	Jeff Francoeur
October 2005	Andruw Jones
November 2005	Brian McCann
December 2005	Andruw Jones
January 2006	Edgar Renteria
February 2006	Niekro, Aaron, Lemaster
March 2006	LaRoche Family
April 2006	Andruw, Smoltz, Chipper
May 2006	Chris Reitsma
June 2006	Francoeur's Slam
July 2006	Edgar Renteria
August 2006	Brian McCann
September 2006	Bob Wickman
October 2006	John Smoltz
November 2006	Bobby Cox
December 2006	Jeff Francoeur
January 2007	Rafael Soriano
February 2007	Spring Training
March 2007	Mike Gonzalez
April 2007	Andruw Jones (Sold Out)
May 2007	Hubbard & Johnson (Sold Out)
June 2007	John Smoltz
July 2007	Diaz & Harris
August 2007	Edgar Renteria
September 2007	Mark Teixeira
October 2007	Jeff Francoeur
November 2007	Chipper Jones
December 2007	John Smoltz
January 2008	Tom Glavine
February 2008	Tim Hudson
March 2008	Mark Kotsay
April 2008	Teixeira & Jones
May 2008	Brian McCann
June 2008	Jair Jurrjens
July 2008	Chipper Jones
August 2008	McCann & Jones
September 2008	Skip Caray
October 2008	Brian McCann
November 2008	Chipper Jones
December 2008	Pete Van Wieren
January 2009	Frank Wren
February 2009	Hank Aaron
March 2009	Derek Lowe
April 2009	Vazquez, Lowe & Kawakami
May 2009	Bobby Cox & Chipper Jones
June 2009	Jeff Francoeur
July 2009	Nate McLouth
August 2009	Tommy Hanson
September 2009	Martin Prado



Diaz's Methods May Be Unconventional, But His Results Are Exceptional

THE Ugly STICK

BY RAY GLIER

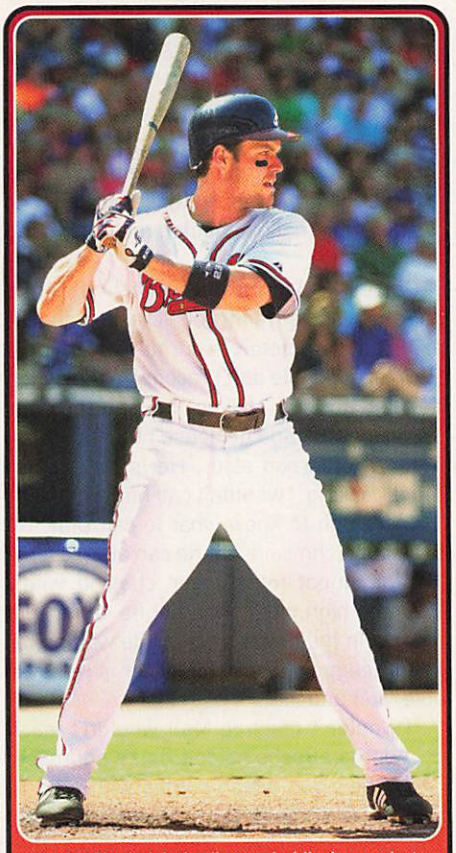
MATT DIAZ'S TEAMMATES roll their eyes when asked about his swing, almost as if Diaz should get counseling. They smile, shake their heads, and then marvel over his approach. They insist they would never teach Diaz's hitting style to their own children and wonder if Diaz would even dare teach it to his own son.

"No, definitely not. I wouldn't teach it to anybody. I agree with them," Diaz said.

It is an inside-out swing most at-bats, a long swing in some at-bats, and an erratic swing in other at-bats, all of which makes it a pure mystery. Diaz will swing at pitches high and away and down and in. He has hit pitches that bounce and pitches that require a box to stand on.

His approach can be so preposterous that no one was surprised when he looked like a backyard Wiffle ball player in an Aug. 23 game against the Marlins. While pitcher Kiko Calero was in his motion, Diaz skipped back a step and a half in the batter's box, anticipating a sinker inside.

Instead, he got a slider, which hung in the air over the inside half of the plate. Diaz lashed the ball into the right-center gap for a triple.



PHOTOS: ATLANTA BRAVES

Diaz lost 30 pounds in the off-season by following a workout and nutrition program with his wife, Leslee, who was coming off pregnancy.

In an Aug. 14 game at Turner Field, Philadelphia pitcher J.A. Haap threw a changeup that had perfect location and pace, down and in. Diaz stayed back and golfed it over the right field fence for a home run.

"The one pitch you can't hit," John Smoltz once told Diaz, "is a strike."

There were enough pitches within bat's reach for Diaz, 31, to be the Braves' best hitter at the end of August. Through 126 games, he was hitting .314 and, following the trade of Jeff Francoeur, Diaz gave the Braves' lefty-heavy lineup a reliable right-handed hitter. Diaz hit .317 in July and had one eight-game stretch where he batted .500. In August, he hit .404!

Diaz is a career .312 hitter, but it is not likely that any videos detailing his mechanics are going to find a spot on the "How To" shelf. He chases high pitches and he waits an interminable amount of time for the pitch to get to him before striking it to the opposite field.

"It's unorthodox, something you wouldn't teach, but at the same time he gets the bat head where he needs to get it," Chipper Jones said. "A lot of times it is ugly, but effective.

"He stays inside the ball, which means he can see it longer. He's not trying to pull it and hit it off the left-field foul pole. Guys who try and do that usually end up hitting .240."

Diaz's inside-out swing was born in college at Florida State where he tried to poke balls over a short porch in right-center field. He stayed back, waited, and slammed 43 home runs in his FSU career and was named All-American in 1999.

Diaz was drafted in the 17th round by the Tampa Bay Rays in 1999 and said that the inside-out swing almost cost him a career. He batted .245 in his rookie season in the minors because he thought the inside-out approach was obsolete, and he spent his at-bats trying to erase the programmed mechanics.

"I fought it my first two years in the minor leagues, trying to get it back to a more conventional swing, but I really struggled," Diaz said. "So, at the end of my first full season in A ball, I was ready to retire. I was hitting .240. Then I decided to try it the way I've done it, like I did in college, and see how it works."

It worked well. Diaz started stringing together .300-plus seasons in the minors, but never got to stay in his home state to make it to the majors. He was signed as a free agent by Kansas City in February 2005, and then traded to Atlanta in December 2005, in exchange for pitcher Ricardo Rodriguez.

Though he's never been a regular player for a full season, the 31-year-old Diaz owns a .312 lifetime batting average in the majors.

Diaz batted .327 in 124 games for the Braves in 2006 when he tied the National League record and set an Atlanta record with hits in 10 consecutive at-bats. In 2007, he hit 338 in 135 games (358 at-bats) and appeared on his way to being a regular until a knee injury in May 2008 shut down his season until late September.

"You will notice my quick outs, my bad at-bats, are because I didn't let the ball travel," Diaz said. "I wasn't willing to get jammed, and I rolled over the ball to shortstop. When I let the ball travel, then the funky swing is at its best."

Diaz came back for this season in tip-top shape after going through the P90x workout regimen with his wife, Leslee. It was a 90-day blitz of strenuous, one-hour workouts, six days a week, plus a nutrition plan.

He started the workout the day after the 2008 season ended, and when he finished at the end of December, he weighed around 200 pounds, down from 230.

"Even though I was in good cardiovascular shape because of all the rehab on my knee, I couldn't make it through all the

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

PHILS' SIGNING OF PEDRO PAYING OFF IN PITCHES

PHILLIES RIGHTHANDER Pedro Martinez, who turns 38 on Oct. 25, is coming off three straight injury-marred seasons. Yet, he threw 249 pitches in back-to-back starts in September – the second-highest total by any pitcher in consecutive starts this season, according to STATS LLC. Tigers righty **Justin Verlander** had the highest two-start total – 251. Martinez's 130 pitches against the Mets represented his highest total since May 1, 2001.

AB

Padres ownership is planning a payroll of at least $40 million for next season. Such a figure would enable the team not only to keep both first baseman **Adrian Gonzalez** and closer **Heath Bell**, but also to sign at least one free-agent starting pitcher. The Padres' obligations for next season, including arbitration-eligible players, currently project to be in the low $30 million range. GM **Kevin Towers** believes the team can be a surprise contender, the 2010 version of the Giants.

AB

Dodgers GM **Ned Colletti** not only has developed a knack for making deals while assuming little salary before the July 31 non-waiver deadline, but also has proven handy around the Aug. 31 deadline for setting post-season rosters. In 2006, Colletti obtained infielder **Marlon Anderson**, who hit seven home runs for the Dodgers that September. **Ron Belliard** could be this year's version of Anderson, because he got off to a hot start with the club.

AB

Diamondbacks third base coach **Chip Hale** could emerge as a top managerial candidate for the Nationals. Hale managed in the D-Backs' farm system when Nationals general **Mike Rizzo** was the team's scouting director. The Nationals also have kicked around the idea of hiring **Bobby Valentine**, who would give the team an instant identity. Interim manager **Jim Riggleman** also will receive consideration.

AB

While some rival executives believe that the logical next step for the Pirates would be to trade either **Paul Maholm** and/or **Zack Duke**, sources say that the only way the team would trade either lefty is if it received a younger major league starter of similar quality, plus another piece. Maholm is under club control through 2012 at affordable salaries, while Duke will receive increases from his current salary of $2.2 million in his remaining two years of arbitration.

AB

Marlins second baseman **Dan Uggla**, a candidate to be traded this off-season, is no bargain financially. His salary this season is $5.35 million, and he will get two more cracks at arbitration before becoming a free agent after the 2011 season. The Orioles, Twins, Giants, Diamondbacks, Dodgers and Cardinals are among the teams that have shown past interest in Uggla. The Orioles are among the clubs that would prefer him at third base.

AB

The Cardinals' **Skip Schumaker** rates as one of the worst defensive second basemen in the majors, according to advanced defensive metrics, but one scout says the converted outfielder is improving. "He's making plays that in spring training I would have bet my house he could not have made," the scout said.

- KEN ROSENTHAL IS A SENIOR WRITER FOR FOXSPORTS.COM

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

workouts when I started," Diaz said.

"My wife was the one that bought it, and I told her I would do it with her the first couple of days and get myself in shape to lift weights at the gym. After two weeks, I had lost five pounds, and I was feeling really good and decided to keep doing it.

"There is no workout partner quite like a woman coming off pregnancy. There is no one quite that motivated."

The P90x did not necessarily make Diaz a better hitter, but it made him a better athlete and more sturdy for increased playing time. When outfielders Ryan Church and Nate McLouth ran into injury problems in August, Diaz became an everyday player and thrived.

The fact Chipper Jones was struggling made Diaz's bat even more indispensable because he helped pick up the slack. Bobby Cox trusted Diaz so much that he moved him to the leadoff spot by the end of August.

Diaz hit .216 in April and .250 in June, but when he got more at-bats, he fell into a groove with his swing. Typically an aggressive swinger, Diaz started to see more pitches and has a career-high 24 walks this season.

"When I finally made it to the big leagues, I was a bench guy and I wasn't going to get cheated and let the first pitch get by me and then face two nasty pitches. So I would get my hacks," Diaz said. "It has been a conscious effort this season to get deeper in the counts. My batting average didn't show it in April, but I was really seeing a lot of pitches, and that has helped me later in the year."

Garret Anderson has watched Diaz's approach and says the idea Diaz is a "hacker" is not completely accurate.

"A lot of people don't recognize that when he gets to two strikes, he shortens his swing up a lot, and he doesn't try and do too much," Anderson said. "He is not just up there hacking. I wouldn't call him a hacker."

It is tough to know what to call Diaz. He can be a technician, but he can also resemble the impatient slugger chasing wildly after the high pitch. The fact he can adjust his feet in the batter's box while waiting for major league pitchers to deliver is remarkable, and unusual.

"I wouldn't teach it, Matt wouldn't teach it," Adam LaRoche said of Diaz's approach. "What he's got, which comes with a lot of at-bats, is something that works for him, and he is comfortable and I will teach that to kids. Do what feels comfortable to you.

"Matt is an example of finding out what you need to do to be successful."

Schedule is tentative and subject to change.
Game times and broadcast information to be determined.
Home games in bold.

SCHEDULE 2010

APRIL

Friday, April 2,	**(Exhibition) White Sox**
Saturday, April 3	**(Exhibition) White Sox**
Monday, April 5	**Cubs**
Wednesday, April 7	**Cubs**
Thursday, April 8	**Cubs**
Friday, April 9	at San Francisco
Saturday, April 10	at San Francisco
Sunday, April 11	at San Francisco
Monday, April 12	at San Diego
Tuesday, April 13	at San Diego
Wednesday, April 14	at San Diego
Friday, April 16	**Colorado**
Saturday, April 17	**Colorado**
Sunday, April 18	**Colorado**
Tuesday, April 20	**Philadelphia**
Wednesday, April 21	**Philadelphia**
Thursday, April 22	**Philadelphia**
Friday, April 23	at Mets
Saturday, April 24	at Mets
Sunday, April 25	at Mets
Monday, April 26	at St. Louis
Tuesday, April 27	at St. Louis
Wednesday, April 28	at St. Louis
Thursday, April 29	at St. Louis
Friday, April 30	**Houston**

MAY

Saturday, May 1	**Houston**
Sunday, May 2	**Houston**
Tuesday, May 4	at Washington
Wednesday, May 5	at Washington
Thursday, May 6	at Washington
Friday, May 7	at Philadelphia
Saturday, May 8	at Philadelphia
Sunday, May 9	at Philadelphia
Monday, May 10	at Milwaukee
Tuesday, May 11	at Milwaukee
Wednesday, May 12	at Milwaukee
Friday, May 14	**Arizona**
Saturday, May 15	**Arizona**
Sunday, May 16	**Arizona**
Monday, May 17	**Mets**
Tuesday, May 18	**Mets**
Wednesday, May 19	**Cincinnati**
Thursday, May 20	**Cincinnati**
Friday, May 21	at Pittsburgh
Saturday, May 22	at Pittsburgh
Sunday, May 23	at Pittsburgh
Tuesday, May 25	at Florida
Wednesday, May 26	at Florida
Thursday, May 27	at Florida
Friday, May 28	**Pittsburgh**
Saturday, May 29	**Pittsburgh**
Sunday, May 30	**Pittsburgh**
Monday, May 31	**Philadelphia**

JUNE

Tuesday, June 1	**Philadelphia**
Wednesday, June 2	**Philadelphia**
Thursday, June 3	at Dodgers
Friday, June 4	at Dodgers
Saturday, June 5	at Dodgers
Sunday, June 6	at Dodgers
Monday, June 7	at Arizona
Tuesday, June 8	at Arizona
Wednesday, June 9	at Arizona
Thursday, June 10	at Arizona
Friday, June 11	at Minnesota
Saturday, June 12	at Minnesota
Sunday, June 13	at Minnesota
Tuesday, June 15	**Tampa Bay**
Wednesday, June 16	**Tampa Bay**
Thursday, June 17	**Tampa Bay**
Friday, June 18	**Kansas City**
Saturday, June 19	**Kansas City**
Sunday, June 20	**Kansas City**
Tuesday, June 22	at White Sox
Wednesday, June 23	at White Sox
Thursday, June 24	at White Sox
Friday, June 25	**Detroit**
Saturday, June 26	**Detroit**
Sunday, June 27	**Detroit**
Monday, June 28	**Washington**
Tuesday, June 29	**Washington**
Wednesday, June 30	**Washington**

JULY

Friday, July 2	**Florida**
Saturday, July 3	**Florida**
Sunday, July 4	**Florida**
Monday, July 5	at Philadelphia
Tuesday, July 6	at Philadelphia
Wednesday, July 7	at Philadelphia
Friday, July 9	at Mets
Saturday, July 10	at Mets
Sunday, July 11	at Mets
Tuesday, July 13 All-Star Game	at Anaheim
Thursday, July 15	**Milwaukee**
Friday, July 16	**Milwaukee**
Saturday, July 17	**Milwaukee**
Sunday, July 18	**Milwaukee**
Tuesday, July 20	**San Diego**
Wednesday, July 21	**San Diego**
Thursday, July 22	**San Diego**
Friday, July 23	at Florida
Saturday, July 24	at Florida
Sunday, July 25	at Florida
Tuesday, July 27	at Washington
Wednesday, July 28	at Washington
Thursday, July 29	at Washington
Friday, July 30	at Cincinnati
Saturday, July 31	at Cincinnati

AUGUST

Sunday, Aug. 1	at Cincinnati
Monday, Aug. 2	**Mets**
Tuesday, Aug. 3	**Mets**
Wednesday, Aug. 4	**Mets**
Thursday, Aug. 5	**San Francisco**
Friday, Aug. 6	**San Francisco**
Saturday, Aug. 7	**San Francisco**
Sunday, Aug. 8	**San Francisco**
Monday, Aug. 9	at Houston
Tuesday, Aug. 10	at Houston
Wednesday, Aug. 11	at Houston
Friday, Aug. 13	**Dodgers**
Saturday, Aug. 14	**Dodgers**
Sunday, Aug. 15	**Dodgers**
Monday, Aug. 16	**Dodgers**
Tuesday, Aug. 17	**Washington**
Wednesday, Aug. 18	**Washington**
Thursday, Aug. 19	**Washington**
Friday, Aug. 20	at Cubs
Saturday, Aug. 21	at Cubs
Sunday, Aug. 22	at Cubs
Monday, Aug. 23	at Colorado
Tuesday, Aug. 24	at Colorado
Wednesday, Aug. 25	at Colorado
Friday, Aug. 27	**Florida**
Saturday, Aug. 28	**Florida**
Sunday, Aug. 29	**Florida**
Monday, Aug. 30	**Mets**
Tuesday, Aug. 31	**Mets**

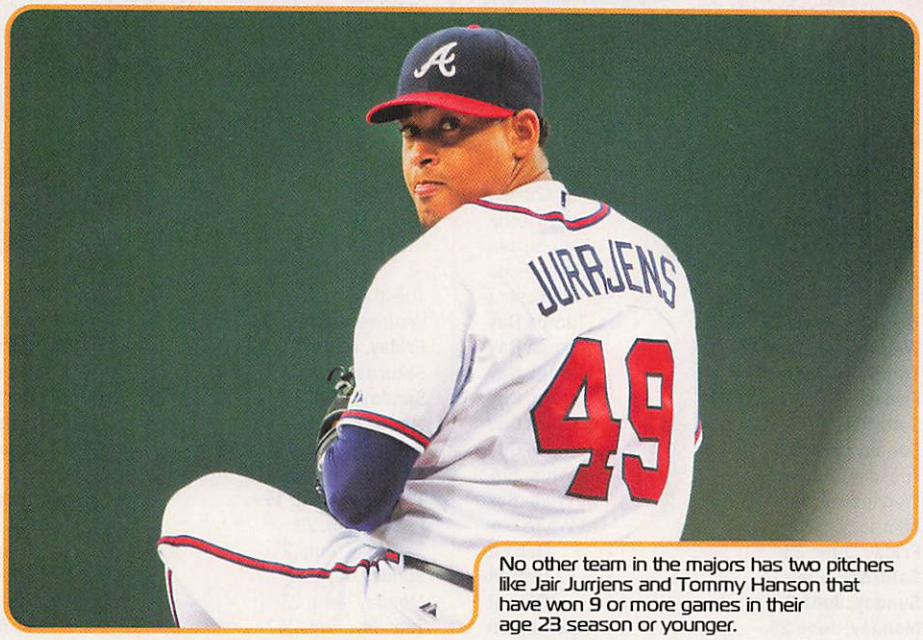
SEPTEMBER

Wednesday, Sept. 1	**Mets**
Thursday, Sept. 2	**Mets**
Friday, Sept. 3	at Florida
Saturday, Sept. 4	at Florida
Sunday, Sept. 5	at Florida
Monday, Sept. 6	at Pittsburgh
Tuesday, Sept. 7	at Pittsburgh
Wednesday, Sept. 8	at Pittsburgh
Thursday, Sept. 9	**St. Louis**
Friday, Sept. 10	**St. Louis**
Saturday, Sept. 11	**St. Louis**
Sunday, Sept. 12	**St. Louis**
Monday, Sept. 13	**Washington**
Tuesday, Sept. 14	**Washington**
Wednesday, Sept. 15	**Washington**
Friday, Sept. 17	at Mets
Saturday, Sept. 18	at Mets
Sunday, Sept. 19	at Mets
Monday, Sept. 20	at Philadelphia
Tuesday, Sept. 21	at Philadelphia
Wednesday, Sept. 22	at Philadelphia
Friday, Sept. 24	at Washington
Saturday, Sept. 25	at Washington
Sunday, Sept. 26	at Washington
Monday, Sept. 27	**Florida**
Tuesday, Sept. 28	**Florida**
Wednesday, Sept. 29	**Florida**

OCTOBER

Friday, Oct. 1	**Philadelphia**
Saturday, Oct. 2	**Philadelphia**
Sunday, Oct. 3	**Philadelphia**

WHIZ KIDS: JURRJENS AND HANSON



ATLANTA BRAVES

No other team in the majors has two pitchers like Jair Jurrjens and Tommy Hanson that have won 9 or more games in their age 23 season or younger.

BY STEVE FALL

EFFECTIVE YOUNG starting pitchers are a prized commodity. The Braves have two of the best in the game.

Through the end of August, only seven major league pitchers in their age-23 season or younger had won at least nine games. With Jair Jurrjens (10) and Tommy Hanson (9), the Braves possess two of them. No other team has more than one.

Jurrjens became just the sixth player in franchise history since 1900 to win 10 games in both his age-22 *and* 23 seasons (determined by a player's age on June 30). He joined Steve Avery (1992-93), John Smoltz (1989-90), George Stone (1969-70), Lefty Tyler (1912-13) and Hugh McQuillan (1920-21).

Jurrjens had won 23 career games in a Braves uniform (through Aug. 31). Only three Atlanta Braves pitchers surpassed that figure through their age-23 campaigns: Avery (50), Stone (31) and Smoltz (28).

With a 2.89 ERA this season, Jurrjens owned the best figure ever for an age-23 Atlanta Braves pitcher (minimum: 162 innings). Avery came next at 2.94 in 1993. Nobody the same age had topped Jurrjens' figure in franchise history in over 90 years. A trio of Boston era pitchers – Jesse Barnes (2.37 ERA in 1916), Mal Eason (2.75 in 1902) and Tyler (2.79 in 1913) – had the lowest figures after 1900.

Including his limited appearances with the Tigers in 2007 (seven starts), Jurrjens held a 3.42 career ERA. Among active pitchers that had at least 300 innings through age-23, only five managed lower figures: Pedro Martinez (3.25), Carlos Zambrano (3.25), Barry Zito (3.25), Dontrelle Willis (3.27) and Chad Billingsley (3.33).

Although he had only made 15 starts through the end of August, Hanson already stands out in team history. His 3.15 ERA marked the second-lowest ever by an Atlanta Braves pitcher in his age-22 season (minimum: 15 starts). Twenty years ago, Smoltz posted a 2.94 figure. Even taking franchise history back to 1900, only one more pitcher surpasses Hanson. Bill James of the 1914 World Champion "Miracle" Boston Braves had a 1.90 ERA.

Hanson's ERA looks even more impressive when compared to the league average. His 3.15 figure was 1.09 earned runs below the National League average of 4.24. That topped all pitchers in franchise history with at least 15 starts in their age-22 season. James came next with a 0.89 difference in his aforementioned 1914 campaign.

Even though he didn't join the team until early June, Hanson's nine wins ranked fifth among Atlanta Braves in their age-22 season. Jurrjens (13), Stone (13), Smoltz (12) and Avery (11) led him.

Hanson also had a strong 2.28 strikeout-to-walk ratio. Since 1900, Smoltz is the only other 22-year-old Braves pitcher with at least 15 starts to have a better figure. He had a 2.33 ratio in 1989.

On a team loaded with left-handed batters, Matt Diaz fills a vital role. Bobby Cox knows he can count on Diaz to hammer lefty pitchers. Among NL hitters with at least 75 plate appearances against southpaws, Diaz ranked fourth with a .398 batting average. That trailed only David Wright (.432), Matt Kemp (.405) and Ryan Braun (.404). Diaz had delivered power as well, posting a .618 slugging percentage against lefthanders. His numbers against righthanded pitchers were solid (.272 BA, .438 SLG), but they pale in comparison to his work versus lefties.

Diaz's career numbers follow this same pattern to a lesser extent. He had hit .343 with a .531 slugging percentage against southpaws compared to .283 and .396 off righties. He reaches the seats more than twice as often against lefthanders. Diaz had hit 23 home runs in 651 career plate appearances against lefties. He had 10 homers in a nearly identical number of plate appearances (648) when facing righthanders.

Chipper Jones' batting average stood at .278 through Aug. 31. That marked an 86-point drop from his NL-leading .364 in 2008. Jones would have to fall considerably further to post the biggest drop ever by a batting champion. Norm Cash of the 1961-62 Detroit Tigers had his average plummet 118 points to .243 after leading the AL with a .361 average in 1961.

Despite the much lower average, Jones still reaches base. He had a .400 on-base percentage. Should that hold up through the end of the season, it will give him five straight years at this level. Among major leaguers with at least 400 plate appearances each year from 2005 through 2009, only Albert Pujols has a chance to match Jones' feat. The Braves switch-hitter already had a run of six consecutive seasons with a .400 on-base percentage from 1998 to 2003. No other player in franchise history has had more than three straight .400 OBP campaigns.

Prolonged Slump Causes Frustrated Reigning NL Batting Champ To Ponder Retirement After 2010

NOT SO CHIPPER

BY MARK BOWMAN OF MLB.COM

CHIPPER JONES was out of the lineup when the Braves began a three-game series against the Cardinals at Busch Stadium on Sept. 11, but his absence had nothing to do with the early retirement comments he made the previous night.

Bobby Cox simply chose to provide Jones a chance to rest during this series opener and possibly remove himself from the frustration created by the three-month slump that has led him to at least contemplate walking away from $26 million he's owed during the 2011 and 2012 seasons.

"If I'm not going out there producing and helping this team win, then I have no problem walking away," Jones said. "Don't get me wrong, the money is a tremendous draw. It is an attraction, but I miss my family. If I'm not having fun producing and playing the game the way that I have, I'd much rather be doing something else."

While recording just nine hits in his past 77 at-bats and seeing the Braves on the fringe of the wild card race, Jones has become even more discouraged about the fact that he's hit just .226 with a .352 on-base percentage and .368 slugging percentage in his past 76 games.

"It is what it is," Jones said. "When your body and mind are telling you that you're nearing the end and you're not playing the game nearly as well as you once were, the game isn't near as fun."

While spending time with his parents when they attended the series in Houston Sept. 8-10, Jones talked about his age and the part it might be playing in his offensive struggles. In the end, he came to the conclusion that he needs to at least provide himself one more opportunity to prove what he has left next year.

"That's why I'm willing to prepare this offseason for another full year and hopefully bounce back with another good year, and have this team have a good year and ultimately make the playoffs," Jones said. "Then, all of the sudden, the game gets fun again."

Jones' retirement talk isn't completely new. When he signed his three-year, $39 million contract extension in March, the 37-year-old third baseman revealed that he'd spent some time during the off-season thinking about the possibility of walking away from his distinguished career at the conclusion of this current season.

CARLOS RESTREPO

After hitting .364 last season and .335 through June 7 this year, Chipper saw his average dip into the .260s at press time due to a .226 average in his last 76 games.

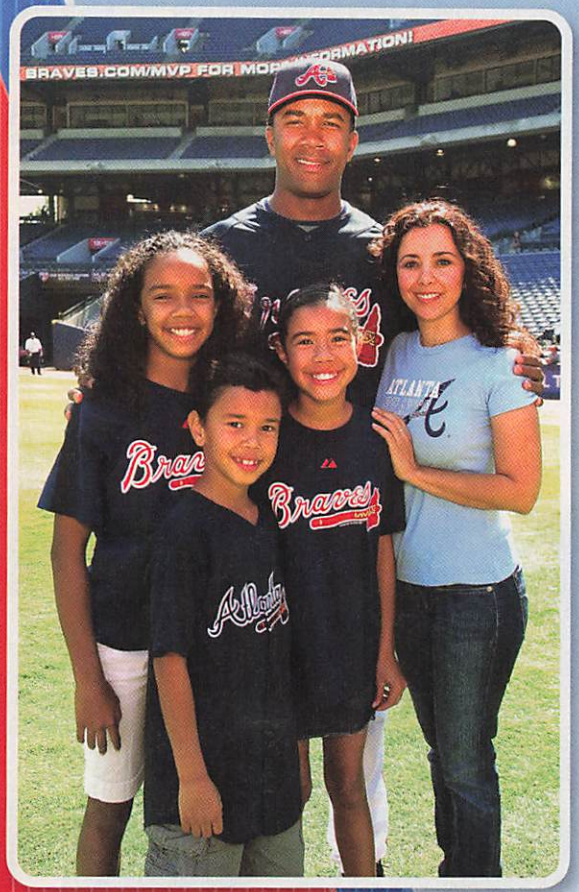
Considering that he'd won his first batting title while hitting a career-best .364 last year, there didn't seem to be much reason to put much credence in the possibility that he wouldn't at least play out the entirety of his new contract.

When he hit .335 with a 1.017 OPS in his first 48 games this year, there was less reason to even think about the potential for an early departure. Over the course of the three previous seasons, he hit .342 with a 1.027 OPS.

But Jones' fortunes seemingly began to change overnight, and despite the fact that it appears he'll play at least 130 games for just the third time in the past seven years, the veteran third baseman is now destined to deem this season a disappointment.

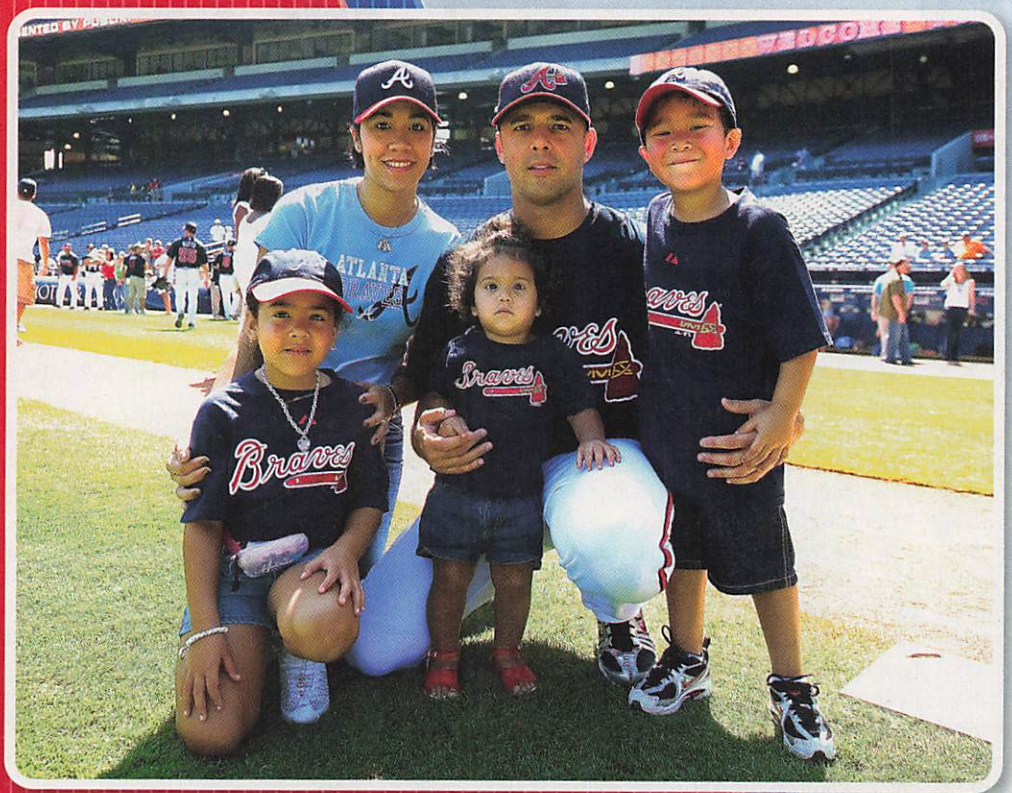
"I can't sit here and say 'my oblique hurts' or 'my legs hurt,'" Jones said. "Being perfectly honest, I feel fine. Don't get me wrong, I'm dog-tired. But this is as healthy as I've been this late in the season for a very long time. For me not to be capitalizing on this by producing is bothering me."

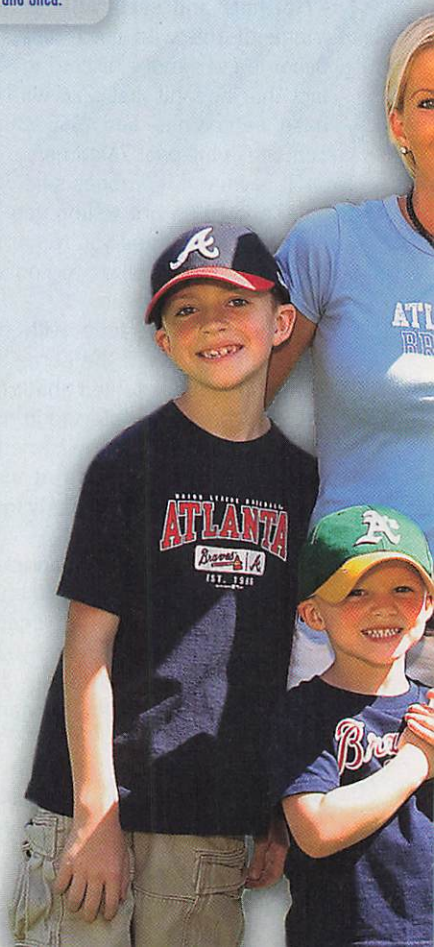
Garret Anderson (below) with his wife, Teresa, and children (L-R) Brianne, Trey and Bailey. Eddie Perez (R) and his wife, Marisol, are joined by (L-R) their children, Maried and Andres, and Eddie's brother, Salvador Perez.

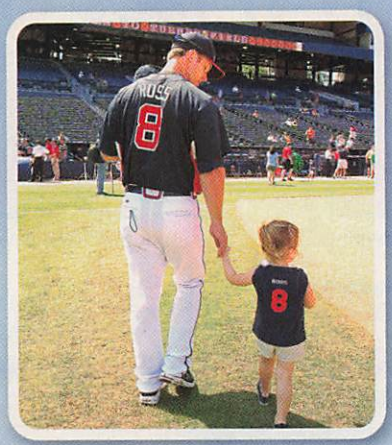


ATLANTA FAMILY

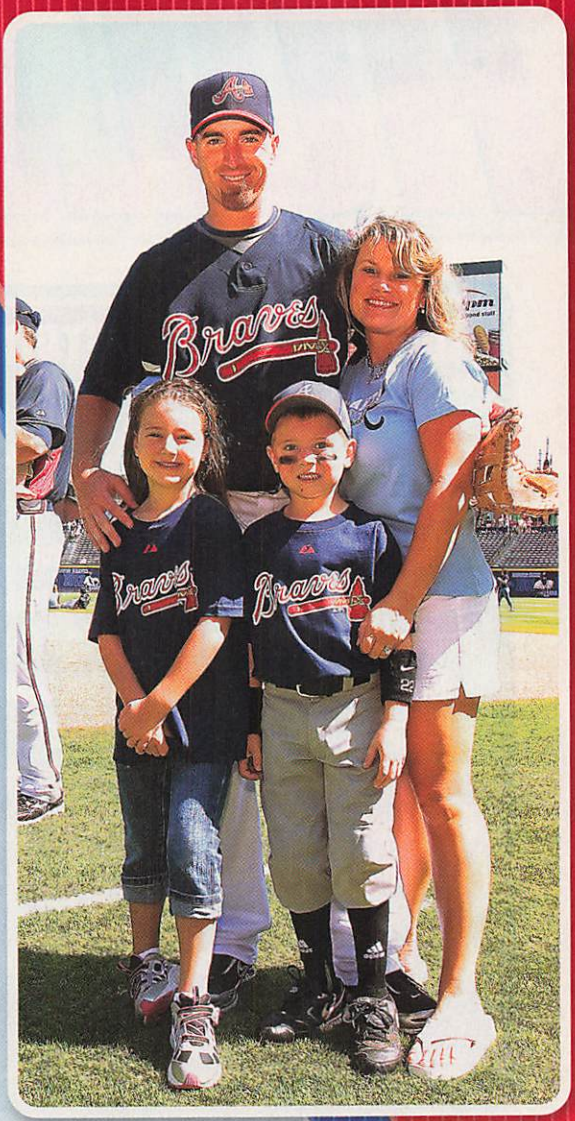
Javier Vazquez and his wife, Kamile (below, L) with children (L-R) Kamila, Kariana and Javier. Chipper and Sharon Jones (below, R) with (L-R) Trey, Tristan and Shea.





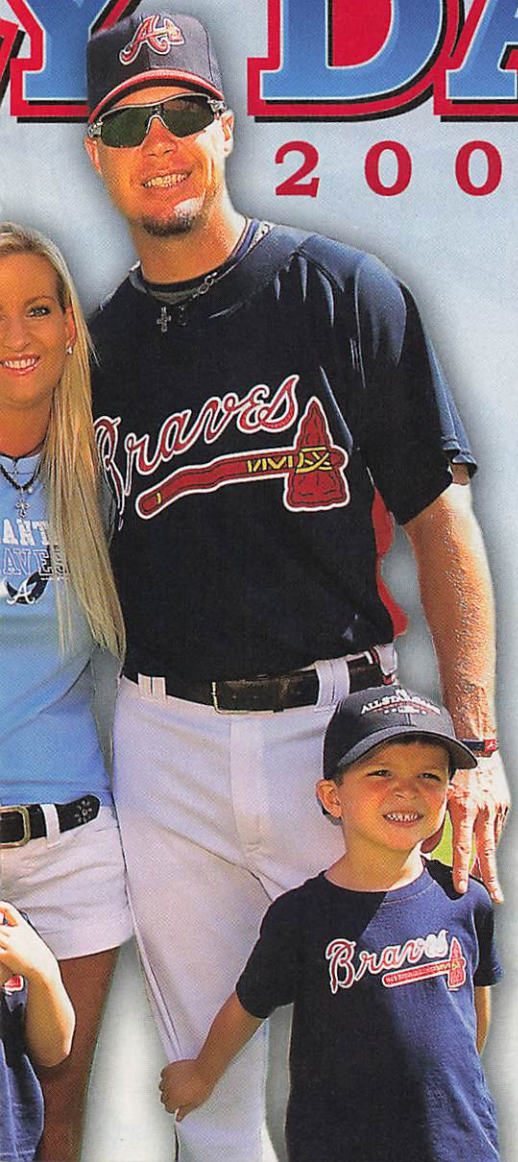


David Ross (L) shows the field to his daughter, Landri, and his infant son, Cole (mostly hidden in his left arm). Brian McCann (above) and his wife, Ashley, pose for the camera.



A BRAVES
Y DAY
2009

Adam LaRoche (R) and his wife, Jenn, with Montana and Drake. Matt Diaz (below) holds Nathan, while his wife, Leslee, holds Anna.



HOLIDAY SP

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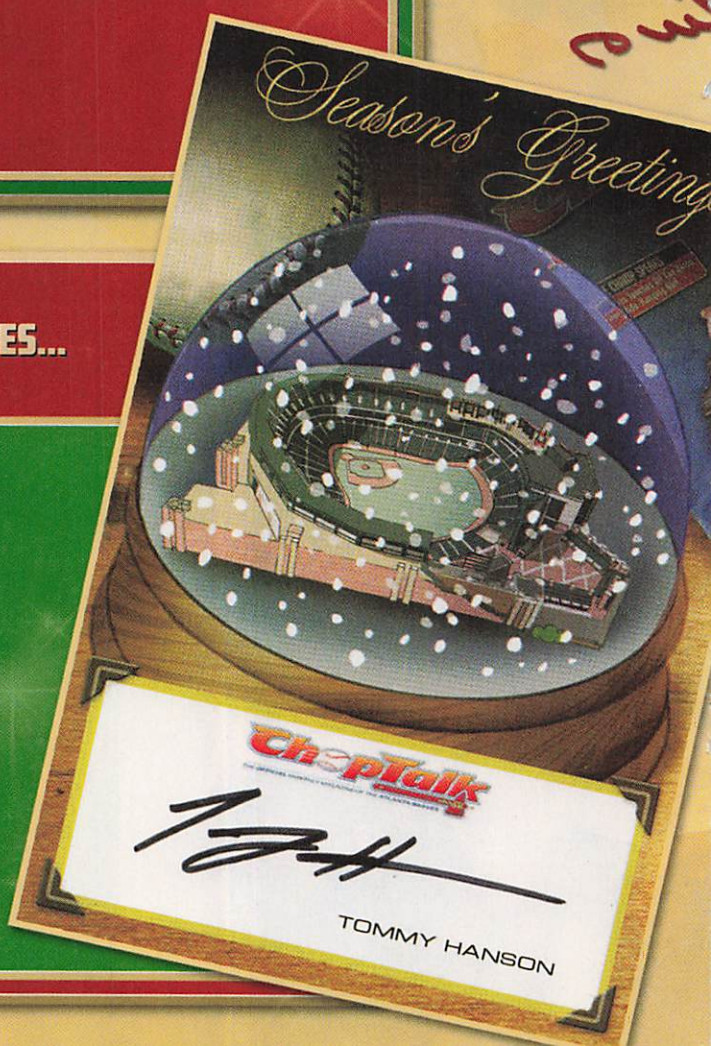

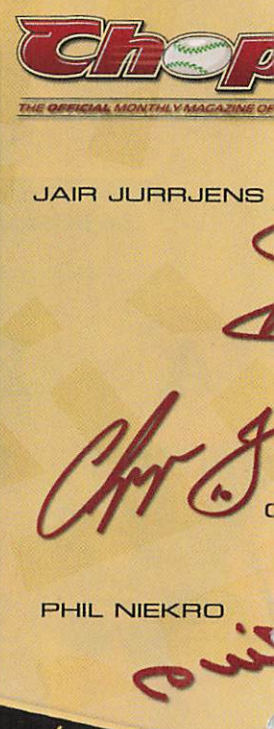

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PART II

THE NEW FRONTIER

Finding future major leaguers on the sandlots of the world is a never-ending, all-consuming task that requires vast resources in personnel and budget. It's also a highly competitive endeavor that, in its own way, is just as aggressive among the 30 franchises in Major League Baseball as is trying to win the World Series.

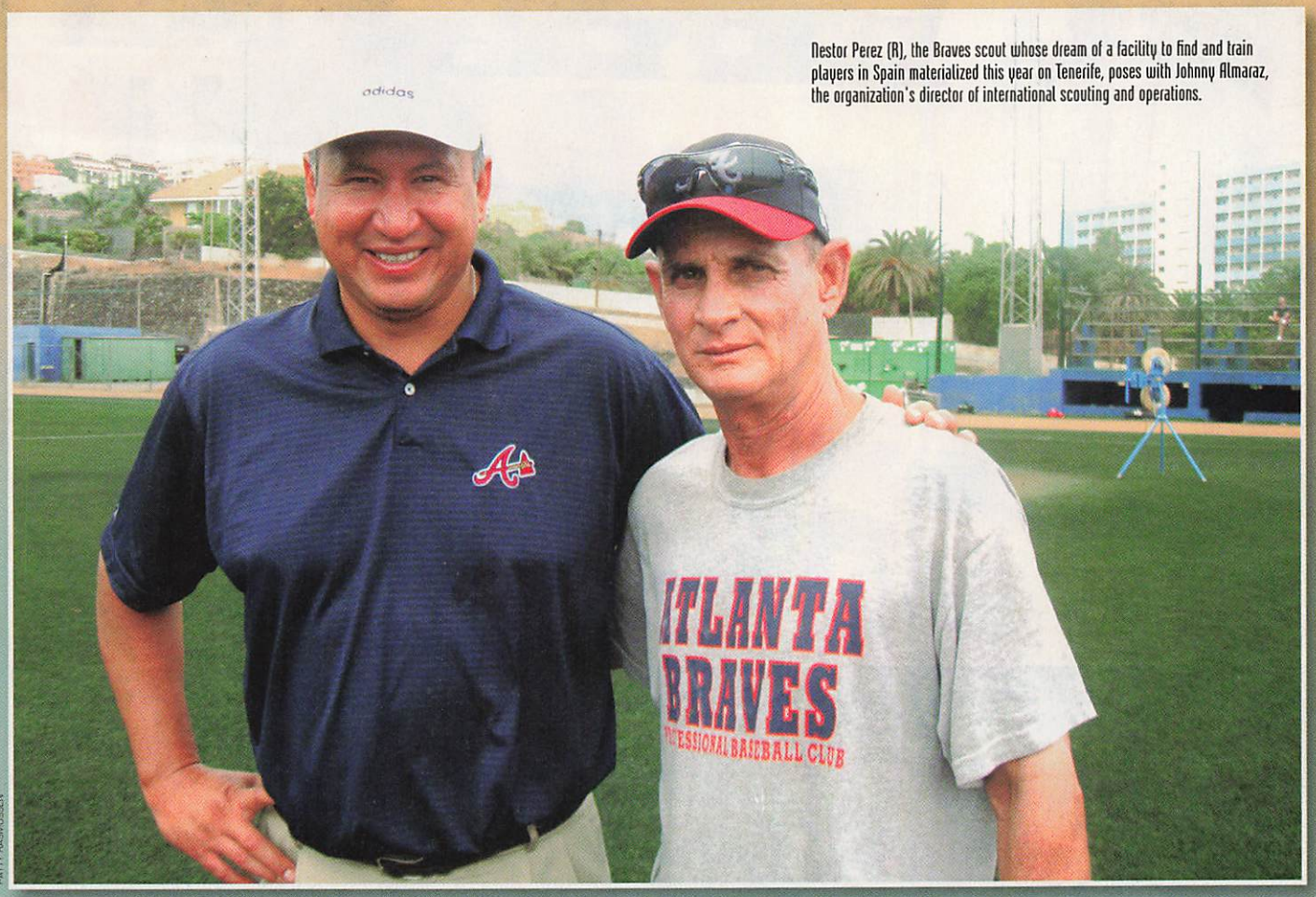
The Braves stepped up that competition to find players a notch - or more - on Feb. 22 when they became the first MLB team to open a facility to develop prospects in Europe (April '09 CT). The Braves' academy is located on Spanish soil, but actually is found on the island of Tenerife in the Canary Islands, only 40 miles off the northwest corner of Africa.

In order to inform ChopTalk readers - the best Braves fans in the world - about the extent this organization goes to in order to find players that hopefully will help win championships in the future, reporter Patty Rasmussen traveled to the Braves' new European academy for five days in mid-July. Her series of stories and photos began in the September issue and concludes this month.

DREAM WEAVER

HOW THE VISION OF CUBAN DEFECTOR NESTOR PEREZ CREATED A FOOTHOLD IN EUROPE

BY PATTY RASMUSSEN



Nestor Perez (R), the Braves scout whose dream of a facility to find and train players in Spain materialized this year on Tenerife, poses with Johnny Almaraz, the organization's director of international scouting and operations.

PATTY RASMUSSEN

IT IS NOT AN EXAGGERATION to say that the Braves Baseball Academy in Tenerife would not have gotten off the ground had it not been for the vision and tenacity of Braves scout Nestor Perez Sr., 57, and the on-the-field leadership and talent of his son, Nestor "Nestico" Perez, 33.

"Fourteen years ago, my father told people that baseball scouts would come to the Canary Islands," said Nestico. "They said he was loco (crazy)! Now the Canary Islands are leading the way for baseball in Spain."

Through their desire to bring a high level of baseball instruction to Europe and their passion for the game, the Perezes have already made an impact both in the Braves organization and in future development of European baseball.

As a result of Nestor's discovery and followup, the Braves signed two players, Dutch-born outfielder Ruben Rijkhof, 17, in April, and Spanish-born shortstop Alejandro Sanchez, 17, in July. Rijkhof played in the Canary Youth League prior to signing and Sanchez, a native of Valencia on the Spanish mainland, attended academy sessions in February and July. The signings did not go unnoticed by other academy players, some of Spain's elite youth baseball players, all of whom enjoyed wearing the Atlanta Braves "A" and logo on their uniforms.

But even without the Braves' record and storied history, players at the academy are well aware of the success of the Puerto Cruz Marlins, a team founded by Nestor in 1997. The Marlins, who play at the stadium where the academy is held, have won the Spanish Championship each year from 2005 through 2009. In 2004, the Marlins won the Confederation of European Baseball (CEB) Cup.

Ricardo Rodriguez, a former Braves minor leaguer now out of baseball, has known the Perezes for years. He played with Nestico on the Spanish Federation

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

PATTY RASMUSSEN

Nestico Perez, a talented and accomplished infielder in international baseball and also a one-time player in the Tampa Bay farm system, is responsible for the day-to-day operations at the Braves' European Academy.

team in the 2005 World Cup and for the past two seasons on the Marlins. Rodriguez is close friends with both of the Perezes.

"They live next to the field, they are always there, and they take care of the kids," said Rodriguez. "They both have a good eye for recognizing and developing talent. Nestor talks to everybody. They are two of the best guys the Braves could have to head up the academy in Spain."

And much of the spread and development of Spanish baseball can be directly attributed to Nestor, a wiry Cuban with over four decades of baseball experience under his belt.

Originally from Matanzas, Cuba, Nestor was a teacher and baseball coach in his native country. He coached with distinction at every level, youth through college, even coaching the elite team from Matanzas in the Cuban National Series, the premier amateur baseball competition in Cuba.

Knowing advancement in his profession was at a dead end in Cuba, Nestor managed to defect to the Canary Islands in 1995. Since that time, he has rebuilt his life in Tenerife. He remarried, living with his wife, Christi, and their son Aaron, 15, in a small home near the baseball stadium.

Their lives revolve around baseball. In addition to founding and coaching the Marlins during their early years, Nestor also managed the Spanish junior national team. He was brought on as a Braves scout through his association with fellow Cuban Jose Martinez, the Braves' assistant director of international scouting/operations and a special assistant to general manager Frank Wren.

Several years ago, with baseball flourishing in Spain and Europe, the Marlins' success solidifying the baseball presence on Tenerife, and the pool of baseball talent expanding, Nestor began planting the seed of starting a baseball academy, built along the same lines as the Braves' academy in the Dominican Republic.

"We found out in the past five years there had been an influx of kids from Cuba, Venezuela, the Caribbean, coming to live in Tenerife and going to play baseball in Spain," said Johnny Almaraz, the Braves' director of international scouting and operations. "A lot of people don't know there's been a professional Italian league for the past 10 years, so there's been a lot of Latino players traveling to Italy to participate in that league. Many of them have stayed in Spain because they developed a professional league here in Spain. Nestor's team, the Puerto de la Cruz Marlins, is one of those teams."

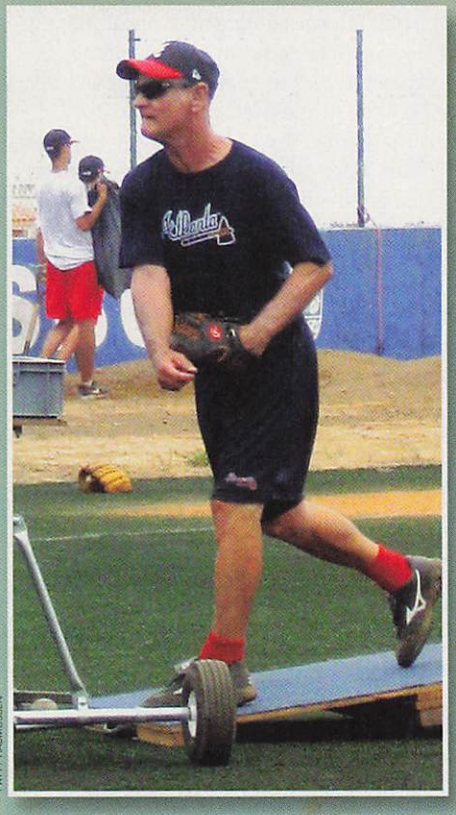
Nestor, the dean of coaches for the Canarian Baseball Federation, began talking to Juan Carlos Cerda, an official with the Spanish Baseball Federation, and with Milagros Luis Brito, the head of the Department of Education, Universities, Culture and Sports of the Government of the Canary Islands, about a possible partner-

ship with the Atlanta Braves. Persistent and persuasive, Nestor painted a picture of a baseball academy at the municipal stadium, of elite Spanish players coming to Tenerife to enhance their skill level, of officials from one of the top major league baseball organizations - the Atlanta Braves - coming to the island looking for baseball talent. The Braves would chip in the expertise and coaching staff, and the federations would supply a place to play and equipment. In the end, all three entities bought into the vision.

"It was definitely Nestor's groundwork and Jose being the point man in all this," said Almaraz. "With all the assets Nestor, along with Jose, created in Spain, and with the Spanish Baseball Federation's involvement, we decided this would be a good thing for us, to be present in Spain with an academy, helping with the development of kids playing baseball and signing those who have the ability to play in the States."

Nestor provides regular reports on European prospects to Phil Dale, the Braves' international coordinator for the Eastern Rim and Europe.

"I'm satisfied with the way things are going, taking into account we only started last February (2009)," said Nestor, through an interpreter. "The players have shown great interest in using their school vacations to come to Tenerife to work hard, listen and learn. Hopefully, they'll continue to get better and maybe be talented enough to play at a high level in Spain and in the United States."



PATTY RASMUSSEN

Nestor Perez, 57, is already credited with scouting and signing two European prospects for the Braves and has hopes for expanding the academy at Tenerife.

Satisfied but not sitting still, Nestor continues to develop plans for expanding the academy while scouting players throughout Europe.

"He has so many ideas," said Rodriguez. "He's talked about starting a winter league - like the kind in Venezuela or the Dominican - in the Canary Islands. It's a big project. It would take at least four teams. Right now, he's just glad to have the academy."

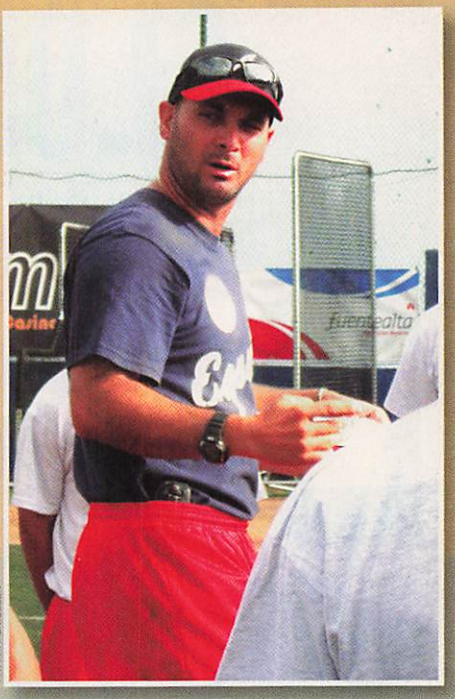
Running the day-to-day operations of the academy falls to the other Perez, Nestico. Also born in Matanzas, Cuba, Nestico was a talented infielder, playing in the Cuban National Series before he defected to the United States. In 1998, Nestico was signed by the Tampa Bay Devil Rays, playing in their organization until 2005, though never climbing higher than Double A. He was a career .241 hitter but was known as a strong fielding shortstop during his time in the minor leagues.

In 2003, Nestico played for the Spanish National Team in the European Championships for the first time. After two more seasons in U.S. baseball, Nestico moved to Tenerife permanently. He continues to play, enjoying success with both the Marlins, as player/manager, and with the Spanish National Team as their starting shortstop and team captain. To date, he has played over 60 games in international competition.

In his role as director of the Braves Baseball Academy, Nestico is responsible for on-field instruction and managing the coaching staff. There are two part-time coaches, also Marlins players - fielding coach Daniel Martinez, who played college baseball at Western Nebraska Community College, and pitching coach Leslie Nacar, who played four seasons in the San Francisco Giants organization. When other coaches visit, whether from the Braves organization or from the MLB Envoy Program, Nestico remains in charge.

"He's very proud to be part of the Braves organization," said Rodriguez. "He always wanted to coach when he was done playing (professional) baseball, and the Braves are giving him the opportunity."

Nestico is a disciplined teacher and runs the academy along the same lines as the



PATTY RASMUSSEN

Nestico Perez, 33, says people used to believe his father was "loco" to think that major league scouts would someday come to Tenerife looking for players.

Braves run their minor league camps, with strong emphasis on fundamentals and communication. The Braves officials who visited the academy this summer are pleased with the progress the academy has made, and will host Nestor, Nestico and Juan Carlos Cerda of the Spanish Federation in October during Instructional League at the Braves' training complex at Disney World in Orlando, Florida.

"We want to make sure they're teaching the game the Braves' way," said Almaraz. "They're doing a great job, but we can fine-tune some points, and they can watch the way we do things and take it back to Tenerife."

In the future, Nestor would like to see the academy operate year-round, with education available to the players, but that dream is many years away. They'd also like to expand the academy to include players from other countries.

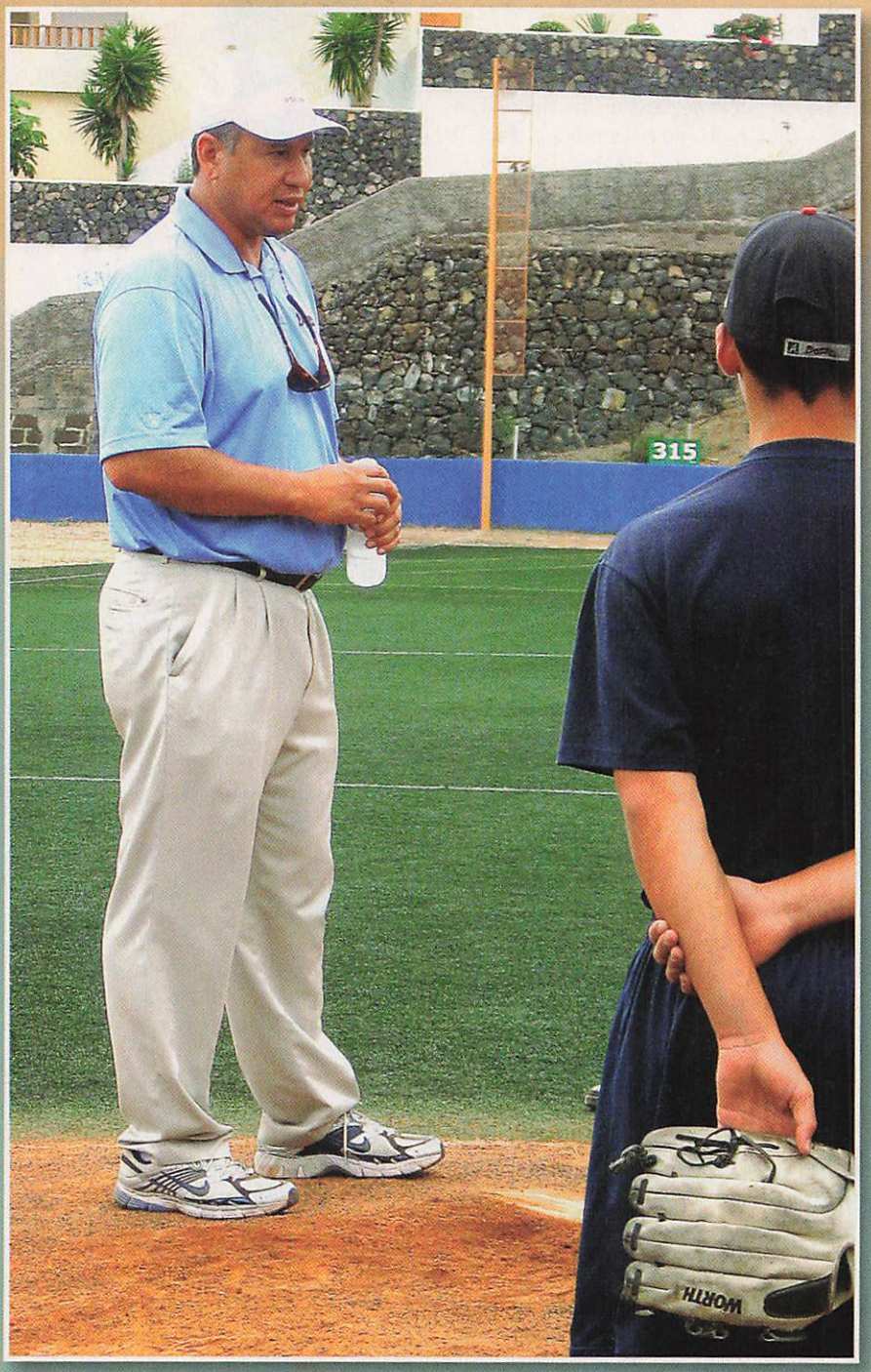
"Right now, it's just Spanish players," said Nestico. "Maybe someday we can open it up to all of Europe."

"Our number-one priority is for Nestor to scout the European prospects and get them here to the academy," said Almaraz. "We want to expose them to a higher level of baseball and impact them as far as their development is concerned so we can get them to the point where they need to be for us to sign."

GLOBAL WARMING

INTERNATIONAL BOSS JOHNNY ALMARAZ SEES THE EUROPEAN MARKET HEATING UP

BY PATTY RASMUSSEN



PATTY RASMUSSEN

Johnny Almaraz, head of the Braves' international scouting effort, says the organization will pursue players wherever baseball is played and expects to eventually expand European operations.

WHEN PAUL SNYDER FIRST MET JOHNNY ALMARAZ 17 years ago, he was immediately impressed.

"He's a worker, very diligent," said Snyder. "He's also a great evaluator of talent. He is able to project how a prospect will develop and doesn't make as many mistakes as the average scout."

That's high praise considering the source. Snyder, a member of the Braves Hall of Fame, worked in the Braves organization for 50-plus years and is widely credited with cultivating the farm system, filling it not just with outstanding playing talent but equally outstanding scouts.

"When I met (Almaraz), he was in the Cincinnati Reds organization," recalled Snyder, "but I knew if we ever got him, he'd be a keeper."

Currently the Braves' director of international scouting and operations, Almaraz also has the confidence of general manager, Frank Wren to fulfill his mandate.

"We want him to seek out talent wherever he finds it," said Wren, simply.

Almaraz has the resume to do just that. He was born and raised in San Antonio, Texas, where he still lives with his family. His father was from Spain and his mother from Mexico. He played college baseball at Southwest Texas State University and was chosen by the Cincinnati Reds in the 14th round of the 1988 amateur draft.

After laboring in the minor leagues for a couple of seasons, during which he sustained a career-ending arm injury, Almaraz decided to go back to school, graduating with a health management degree. He fully expected to live in San Antonio and work in his field when the Reds asked him to be one of their scouts. Deciding to see where that opportunity led, Almaraz ended up overseeing the Reds' drive into Latin America in the hunt for talent. When he left the Cincinnati organization 16 years later, he was the head of player development and enjoyed an outstanding reputation among his baseball peers.

Almaraz came to the Braves in 2007 to run the organization's Latin American

operations. One year later, he was named to his current post, overseeing the Braves' international scouting operations, including a staff of close to 20 international scouts, supervising operations at the Braves' academy in the Dominican Republic, and now also the new academy in Tenerife, Spain.

"He has the final say on everyone that's signed in Latin America and elsewhere," said Snyder.

It's the "elsewhere" that has started getting interesting. By being the first major league baseball organization to set up shop in Europe, the Braves are serving notice that they are willing to invest in a relatively untapped market. And it's okay with Almaraz that the rest of the baseball world is just catching on.

"Discretion is something that I preach," he said. "I really don't like people knowing our business. We want to be discreet about how we work internationally and the interest we show in certain kids. That approach is more productive and allows us to sign the players we want."

Almaraz has high expectations that the Braves' pioneering foray into the field of European talent will be productive.

"If there are players here that have the ability to play at the highest level of competition, we're going to be here to see them," he said. "If they are prospects, we're going to sign them. The only crop you can pick is the one that's ready to harvest."

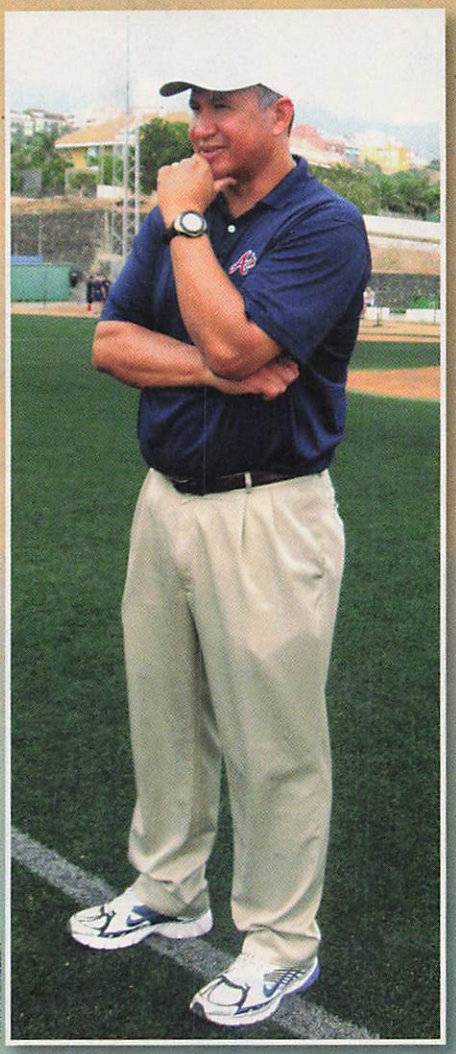
He described scouting as a "seasonal" type activity.

"It seems to be really strong in some areas during certain times of the year and weak in others in certain years," said Almaraz. "I'm not sure why that happens, but that's why we need scouts everywhere. You have to go where the players are, whether it's the Dominican Republic or Venezuela, Panama or Japan."

Though soccer, or futbol, remains king in Europe, Almaraz believes baseball will only continue to grow, especially with the influx of transplanted talent.

"Many Latin players of Spanish descent who are eligible to receive residency/citizenship in Spain have moved (to Europe)," he said. "They've brought baseball with them, and it's becoming more popular by the day."

And it's just a matter of time before scouts begin invading Europe. Currently, the Braves' sole presence in Europe is part-time scout Nestor Perez Sr., in Tenerife, who reports directly to Phil Dale, a long-time scout based in Australia and one of two international coordinators for the Braves. Dale oversees activities in the Pacific Rim and Europe and also serves as the pitching coach at Major League Baseball's Australian Baseball Academy in Queensland, Australia. His experience with the Australian academy will be invaluable while he assists Perez in the development and further expansion of the Braves' academy on Tenerife.



PATTY PADMUSSEN

The Braves lured Almaraz from the Cincinnati Reds organization in late 2006 and named him director of Latin American operations before putting him in charge of all international scouting efforts just over a year later.

At this point, the Braves haven't made plans to add more scouts to Europe, but who knows what the future holds?

"The fact of the matter is they're playing more and more baseball here (Europe), and the Atlanta Braves are going to be present wherever baseball is being played," Almaraz said. "We're going to scout it like we're scouting a high school or Connie Mack game in the States or an academy game in Latin America."

Almaraz likened the European talent search to the first baseball clubs going to Latin America to set up academies and to discover the latest 16-year-old phenom rather than teams scouting in Japan for the first time.

"Baseball had been in Japan for a long time," he said. "They had well-developed professional leagues in Japan and Korea and were very far ahead of European countries."

The exception to the Latin American parallel is the European emphasis on education.

"Spain is an industrialized country, and education is much more important, more valued," he said. "Although players are eligible to sign at 16 years old, we may not be able to fulfill signing him because he wants to finish his education."

In most cases, Almaraz said, they will likely sign a prospect at 16, but allow him to finish his education, called the "bachiller," equivalent to a high school diploma, before putting him into the development system.

The Braves' commitment to the academy and their solitary European scout is more instructional than infrastructure, providing guidelines about what they're looking for in players in order for them to become prospects. Once a prospect is identified, they want to expose him to the Braves' way of playing baseball, which means coaches need to be trained in the "Braves way."

"We share the instruction part of our program, whether it's pitching, outfield and infield play, or hitting," said Almaraz. "Some of our instructors have been (in Tenerife) already and have given coaching clinics for the coaches who will be there, in addition to instruction to the kids who are in the academy."

And one thing is certain: The Braves are in Europe to stay.

"We're fully committed to the academy here in Spain, due to the fact that we've seen progress of how baseball is played," he said. "We see steady support of the government itself to promote baseball in Spain. We're finding the players are getting bigger and stronger and learning the game a little better. We think we're just touching the tip of the iceberg. Where baseball is concerned, you have to be productive year in and year out. If we see a country where productivity is high, our interest is going to be high there, too."

The entire Danville squad celebrates after a season that included not only the league championship, but numerous individual awards, as well.

PHOTOS: BILL SETLIFF

CHAMPS AGAIN!

RUNGE LEADS DANVILLE TO SECOND APPALACHIAN LEAGUE TITLE IN FOUR YEARS

BY DREW WILSON

DRIPPING WITH THE ICE WATER that his players dumped on him minutes earlier, Danville Braves manager Paul Runge leaned against the desk in his clubhouse office. The normally stoic Runge was almost on the verge of tearing up as he recalled his team's decisive win against the Elizabethton Twins in the 2009 Appalachian League championship moments earlier.

As Runge, an Atlanta utility infielder from 1981-88, boasted like a proud father about his players that just brought the Danville Braves their second title in four years on Sept. 3, the parent Atlanta Braves were playing the Florida Marlins on the television above Runge's left shoulder. It seemed only fitting that Atlanta rookie Kris Medlen was pitching against the Florida Marlins on this night. Just a day earlier, Runge recalled the 2006 Appalachian League championship series, where Medlen played a key role in the rookie league affiliate's only other league title since relocating from Pulaski, Va., to Danville, Va., in 1993.

Rain forced that 2006 series to be decided with a doubleheader (7-inning games) in Elizabethton, Tenn. Danville won the first game at home the day before, but the Twins knotted the series on their own field in the first game of the twinbill. With the championship hinging on a decisive Game 3, Danville's Danny Brezeale broke a 3-3 tie with a solo home run in the top of the seventh inning.

Medlen, who was a lights-out closer for the D-Braves all season, earlier entered the game with two outs in the bottom of the sixth and a runner on second base and got a strikeout to get Danville out of the jam. Medlen finished the job in the seventh, striking out the side on nine pitches to seal Danville's first league championship.

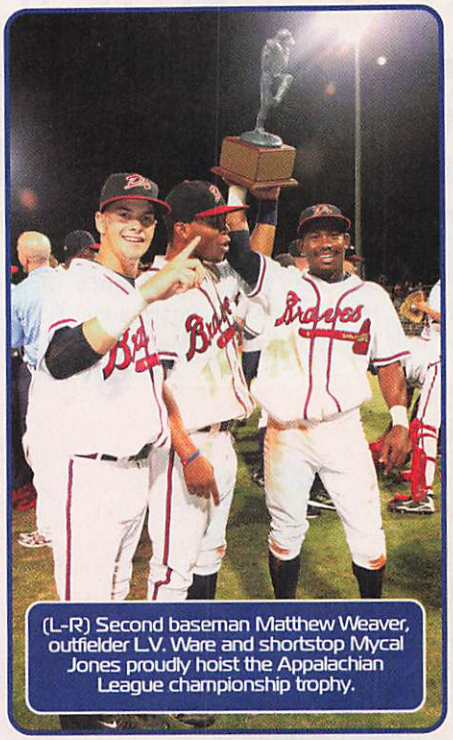
This year's Appalachian League title came with much less drama - a two-game sweep of Elizabethton that ended with a 5-0 win in the clincher - but there was a feeling that this one meant more to Runge. It didn't erase some of the team's shortcomings in past championships series, but it certainly helped ease his mind.

For more than 16 years, the team's faithful fans have flocked to Dan Daniel Park, nestled just several hundred yards up the hill from the Dan River, which flows through the former mill town with a population around 47,000. Yet, the team had never been able to win a title in front of its home fans.

They came close in 2005 against the Twins, but gave up the deciding run in the eighth inning. That, coupled with losing the 2004 title to the Greeneville Astros on a walkoff homer in the 10th inning on the road, getting swept in two games by the Twins in 2007, and failing to make the playoffs in 2008, certainly left a bad taste in Runge's mouth. So the latest championship was even sweeter, considering it was won on the team's own turf.

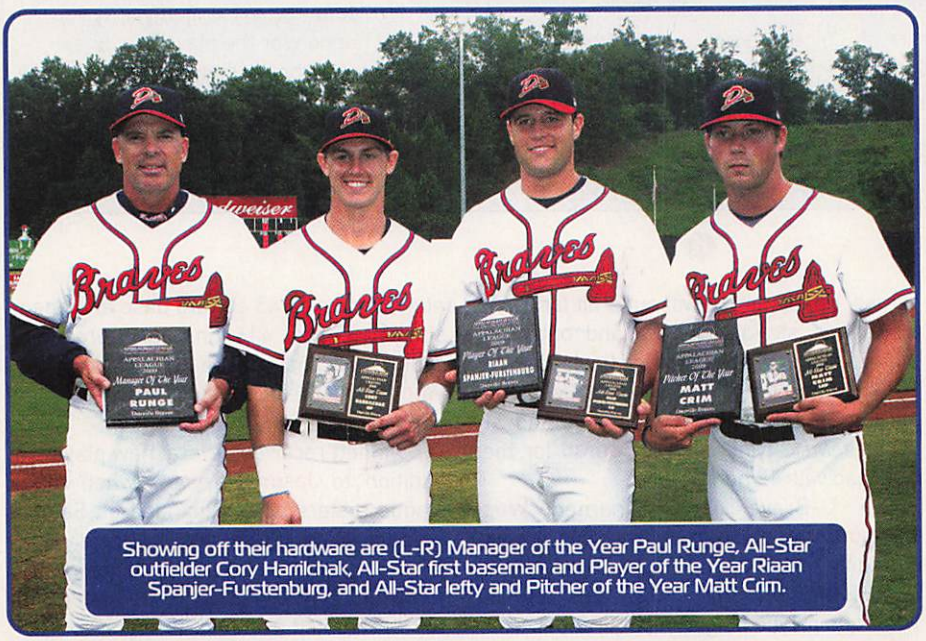
"I've been at this a long time. I've seen a few championships get away here," said the 51-year-old Runge. "So for me, personally, it was kind of a relief and gratifying to offset some of the losses that we've taken here. I took some of those as a manager pretty hard when we were just outs away from winning a championship and it got away from us."

This year, the D-Braves clinched their fifth Appalachian League East Division crown in six seasons with more than a week left in the season. As Runge rested his key players and set up his rotation for the playoffs, he made sure to bring home one point.



(L-R) Second baseman Matthew Weaver, outfielder L.V. Ware and shortstop Mycal Jones proudly hoist the Appalachian League championship trophy.

"Our coaching staff (hitting coach Carlos Mendez and pitching coach Derrick Lewis) reminded them that these opportunities don't necessarily come every year," said Runge, who's been managing in the Atlanta farm system since 1993 (Idaho Falls), the last five seasons at Danville, the organization's advanced rookie league affiliate.



Showing off their hardware are (L-R) Manager of the Year Paul Runge, All-Star outfielder Cory Harrilchak, All-Star first baseman and Player of the Year Riaan Spanjer-Furstenburg, and All-Star lefty and Pitcher of the Year Matt Crim.

"Some of the greatest players of all-time have never been a part of a championship series. You have to respect and take advantage of the moment."

His players didn't disappoint this postseason, much like they hadn't all year.

"It was so fun. It was really fun. This, for me, it was a special year because I really enjoyed watching this team play," a choked-up Runge said as he paused several times to compose his emotions. "They came to play every night. They are a good bunch of guys. They pulled together, and the chemistry was great."

His club did everything from turning a triple play in the season's home opener to pitching a seven-inning no-hitter (Cory Rasmus on Aug. 11). The D-Braves also never sustained a losing streak of more than three games all season. As a result, the team swept the Appalachian League's awards for the first time in the organization's history. Runge was awarded with Manager of the Year, while first baseman Riaan Spanjer-Furstenburg was named the Player of the Year and Matt Crim was named the Pitcher of the Year.

"The nucleus of this ballclub comes from out of the extended program in Orlando (Disney's Wide World of Sports), where I get the opportunity to coordinate and co-manage that extended spring training program," Runge said. "We get a chance firsthand to work with these kids to try to prepare them for what lies ahead. By the time we arrive in Danville, we're pretty much up and running after our seven-day mini-camp prior to the start of the regular season."

Runge praised Atlanta's scouting department, which has provided the Braves organization with one of the game's best farm systems since the early 1990s.

"We're getting good players from all over the globe," Runge said. "It's a combination of good scouting and we've got a good nucleus of people in player development that all do their part. We share in that common goal of trying to get these guys ready to play for Bobby Cox some day."

Since 2005, the D-Braves have produced a number of players - such as Yunel Escobar, Tommy Hanson and Medlen - who have become key components on Atlanta's roster. And, as the organization has shown, the trend will likely continue sometime in the near future with some of this season's D-Braves players.

In fact, Runge acknowledged that this year's championship team might be the best during the D-Braves' current dynasty.

BY BILL BALLEW

HEYWARD VAULTS TO GWINNETT, NAMED MINORS' PLAYER OF YEAR

BRAVES OFFICIALS KNEW Jason Heyward's rise to the majors was imminent while watching him last March during big league camp. Despite having played only a handful of games above the low Class-A level at the time, the Braves' first-round draft pick in 2007 displayed impressive poise, makeup and all-around skills to not only play but also to stand out in the major leagues.

That spring performance, during which he batted .300 with a pair of home runs in 40 at-bats, proved to be a harbinger for the regular season. Heyward, who didn't turn 20 years old until Aug. 9, played effortlessly in the Carolina League for the first three months of the season prior to making a seamless shift to Double-A Mississippi in early July. He capped the year with a promotion to Triple-A Gwinnett, where he went 4-for-11 with a pair of RBIs in the final three regular-season games. He finished the season hitting a combined .323 with 17 home runs and 63 RBIs in 99 games.

"We gave Jason the opportunity to step up and face the next challenge, and he did that at every level this season," said Kurt Kemp, the Braves' director of player development. "Players usually show you when they're ready for the next step, and that was indeed the case with Jason. Regardless of where he played, he showed us the ability to be a very special player."

BILL BALLEW

Both USA Today Sports Weekly and Baseball America named Jason Heyward Minor League Player of the Year, making him the most-decorated prospect to come through the Braves' farm system since Andruw Jones, who won the same honor from Baseball America in both 1995 and '96.

Heyward's rapid rise did not go unnoticed outside the organization. Both USA Today's Sports Weekly and Baseball America named the rightfielder their Minor League Player of the Year for 2009. In July, Baseball America also chose Heyward as the top prospect in the minors, and in August, the trade publication released its surveys in which managers voted him as the most exciting player in the advanced Class-A Carolina League and the best batting prospect in the Double-A Southern League. Heyward also was selected as the Topps Player of the Month for July in the Southern League after he led the league with a .425 batting average and 58 total bases and 12 multi-hit games out of 22 played.

About the only thing that slowed Heyward's progress was a couple of minor injuries. He was sidelined from May 26 through the first 10 days of June due to a strained oblique muscle, and was bothered with a hip flexor injury earlier in the season. He battled a bruised heel that caused him to miss about a week just prior to his promotion to Gwinnett, but that did not have any adverse effects on his performance in Triple-A.

"It's definitely exciting any time you get promoted, but to have that happen for the playoffs is unexpected," Heyward said. "I feel good about what I've been able to accomplish so far this year, but I know there's still a lot of work to be done before I get to where I want to be."

GWINNETT
TRIPLE A

The G-Braves earned a spot in the International League playoffs by winning the wild-card with an 81-63 record. Gwinnett finished two games behind first-place Durham in the IL South Division... First baseman/designated hitter **Barbaro Canizares** was named to the International League's year-end all-star team. Canizares hit safely in 95 of his 130 games at Gwinnett and had 45 multi-hit games. He did not go without a hit for more than three straight games, and only had three such streaks. He also led the team with 149 hits (third in the league), 79 RBIs (4th in the IL), a .435 slugging percentage and 31 doubles while tying **Brooks Conrad** for the club lead with 12 home runs...

The G-Brave players named **Wes Timmons** the club's most valuable player. In addition to hitting .283 with 20 doubles, 31 RBIs and a team-high 62 runs scored, Timmons played 50 games at first base, 14 at second base, 45 at third base and one at shortstop. His .416 on-base percentage ranked second in the IL... Closer **Luis Valdez** led the IL with 27 saves and 58 appearances...

Gwinnett received several new players in addition to **Jason Heyward** when major league rosters were expanded on Sept. 1. Catcher **Benji Johnson**, outfielder **Matt Young** and pitchers **Ryne Reynoso**, **Craig Kimbrel**, **Jeff Lyman** and **Deunte Heath** were promoted from Mississippi...

The G-Braves hit three grand slams during the final three weeks of the season. Catcher **Alvin Colina** hit one on Sept. 1, following outfielder **Brandon Jones** (Aug. 23) and infielder **Brooks Conrad** (Aug. 20). Gwinnett hit four home runs this season with the bases loaded and won all four games...

Mid-season pickup **Chris Burke** proved to be a significant addition to the G-Braves' playoff push. He hit safely in 23 of his final 27 games, beginning Aug. 11, and batted .292 with 23 RBIs and nine stolen bases after the all-star break. His versatility also proved to be a key (41 games at shortstop, 16 at second base and 14 in left field)...

Centerfielder **Jordan Schafer** underwent surgery Aug. 31 to remove a bone spur in his left wrist. Schafer, who spent the first two months of the regular season with Atlanta, was bothered with the injury throughout June at Gwinnett. He batted .229 in nine games with the G-Braves, with his final game on July 3. Schafer tried to heal the injury via the conservative route, which included wearing a cast for a month, but to no avail...

Pitcher **Todd Redmond** left Gwinnett during the final week of the regular season in order to join Team USA in the World Cup...

Reid Gorecki went from a little-used outfielder at the beginning of the season to a major leaguer after making the most of his opportunities at Gwinnett. With injuries plaguing the Gwinnett outfield, Gorecki took over the leadoff spot and proceeded to hit .337 in July and was batting .338 in August when he received the call to Atlanta. He batted .342 with the G-Braves after the all-star break with 19 RBIs and 14 extra-base hits in 29 games.

MISSISSIPPI
DOUBLE A

The M-Braves went 34-34 in the season's second half and 65-73 overall... For the second straight season, outfielder **Matt Young** was named the best hustler in the Southern League. The lone Mississippi post-season honoree, Young led the Double-A league with 42 stolen bases and a team-record 94 walks and ranked second with 81 runs scored, 10 triples and a .421 on-base percentage. Young was promoted to Gwinnett for the final week of the season...

Ryne Reynoso finished fourth in the SL with a 3.47 ERA, one spot ahead of **Scott Diamond**, who had a 3.50 ERA. Diamond also tied for third in the league with 111 strikeouts. **Brett Butts**, who had a solid season by going 7-3 with a 2.58 ERA and five saves, ranked fourth in the league with 53 appearances, while **Rafael Cruz** was fifth with 12 saves...

The M-Braves received stellar pitching after lefthander **Jose Ortegano** and closer **Craig Kimbrel** were promoted from Myrtle Beach during the final few days of July. Ortegano went 5-2 with a 2.83 ERA in eight starts with Mississippi, and allowed only two earned runs in his last 13 1/3 innings. The lefty, who frustrates hitters with his assortment of breaking balls and changeups, was particularly tough at Trustmark Park, where he went 4-0 with a 0.36 ERA in four starts... Kimbrel allowed only one earned run in 12 games (11 2/3 innings) with the M-Braves. He also was successful on all six of his save opportunities...

Fans should keep an eye on **Kyle Cofield**, who went 10-5 in 140 2/3 innings of work. Cofield has good stuff but continues to struggle with his control. Opponents hit only .236 against him, and Cofield does an excellent job of forcing batters to hit the ball on the ground...

Despite spending only two months in the SL, **Freddie Freeman** was named the best fielding first baseman in the league in a Baseball America survey of managers. Freeman battled a bruised hand that landed him on the disabled list on Aug. 24 after he hit only .161 for the month...

Kody Kirkland went 5-for-5 with three doubles and a run scored in a 6-5 win over Mobile on Aug. 18. Kirkland, who concluded the night with a walk-off double in the bottom of the ninth to score **Concepcion Rodriguez**, had the first five-hit game for the M-Braves since **Luis Hernandez** on June 8, 2006...

Diamond is not expected to be able to pitch for Canada in the World Cup after injuring his left arm and right leg during a fall while fishing... Third baseman **Eric Campbell**, Atlanta's first pick in the 2004 draft, and catcher **Phillip Britton**, were released in August.

YEAR-END HONORS

ALL-STARS

INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE (GWINNETT)
Barbaro Canizares, DH

CAROLINA LEAGUE (MYRTLE BEACH)
Cody Johnson, DH

APPALACHIAN LEAGUE (DANVILLE)
Riaan Spanjer-Furstenburg, 1B
Cory Harrilchak, OF
Matt Crim, LHP

OTHER AWARDS

USA TODAY MINOR LEAGUE PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Jason Heyward

BASEBALL AMERICA MINOR LEAGUE PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Jason Heyward

PLAYER OF THE YEAR APPALACHIAN LEAGUE
Riaan Spanjer-Furstenburg, 1B

BEST HUSTLER SOUTHERN LEAGUE
Matt Young, OF

MYRTLE BEACH
ADVANCED A

The Pelicans finished in fourth place in the Southern Division in both the first and second halves and ended the year with an overall mark of 53-84 in the Carolina League... **Rocket Wheeler** became the Pelicans' all-time winningest manager when Myrtle Beach beat Winston-Salem, 5-4, on Sept. 5. The victory was Wheeler's 272nd with the Pelicans, which allowed him to slide past **Randy Ingle**, who managed Myrtle Beach from 2002-05...

Leftfielder **Cody Johnson** was named the designated hitter on the Carolina League's year-end all-star team. Johnson, who was promoted to Double-A Mississippi during the final week of the season and went 4-for-22 with nine strikeouts, led the league with 32 home runs and ranked second with a .517 slugging percentage, third with 51 extra-base hits and fourth with 84 RBIs...

In his first full professional season after defecting from Cuba in 2006, third baseman **Donell Linares** paced the CL with 145 hits, placed second with 87 RBIs, and tied for sixth in batting at .287. Other Pelicans ranking among the league leaders included outfielder **Cole Miles** (fourth with seven triples), closer **Cory Gearrin** (fourth with 17 saves) and pitcher **Erik Cordier** (ninth with a 3.87 ERA)...

First baseman **Ernesto Mejia** finished on a strong note after missing more than 10 months with a torn anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee and three weeks after being hit by a pitch on the wrist. Mejia,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 41

ARIZONA BOUND

THE BRAVES WILL ONCE AGAIN send seven players to the Arizona Fall League, headed by top prospect Jason Heyward. The other players include first baseman Freddie Freeman, shortstop Brandon Hicks and pitchers Mike Minor, Craig Kimbrel, Jeff Lyman and Lee Hyde. All seven players will play for the Peoria Saguaros.

Here's what the Braves will be looking for these players to accomplish in Arizona:

Freddie Freeman: The first baseman's progress has mirrored that of Heyward's, with promotions to the next level at the same time until Heyward jumped to Gwinnett during the final week of the regular season. Freeman went on the disabled list Aug. 24 at Mississippi with a bruised hand but should be able to play in Arizona. The Braves want him to face top pitching in preparation for his final push to the majors.

Brandon Hicks: The Texas A&M product is a steady fielder who plays the game with intensity, but his hitting has lagged behind his glovework. Hicks has struggled with strikeouts, which has led to low batting averages, and his power numbers this season at Mississippi were down. The Braves are hoping he can make some adjustments in Arizona to get back on track.

Lee Hyde: Drafted in the fourth round in 2006 out of Georgia Tech, the left-handed reliever has battled injuries, including Tommy John surgery that affected his development in 2007 and 2008. With the constant dearth of southpaws at the major league level, Hyde could be a valuable commodity with some refinement.

Craig Kimbrel: After pitching at three levels in 2008, Kimbrel bounced between Rome and Myrtle Beach during the first half before ending the 2009 season at Mississippi. The Braves consider Kimbrel to be their top relief prospect and want him to face premier hitters in the hitting-oriented Arizona league.

Jeff Lyman: The right-handed Lyman was Atlanta's second-round pick in 2005 and has started to show signs of living up to his lofty draft slot since becoming a full-time reliever over the past year. The Braves want Lyman to learn how to make adjustments against advanced hitters in order to prepare for Triple-A and a possible promotion to the big leagues in 2010.

Mike Minor: Atlanta's first-round pick and the seventh overall selection in the 2009 draft, the Vanderbilt product allowed one run, 10 hits and no walks while striking out 17 in 14 innings at Class-A Rome. Minor did not pitch for two months prior to signing with the Braves, who want the lefthander to face more advanced hitters in preparation for a possible quick tour through the minors next season.

In its 18th season, the AFL is scheduled to begin regular-season play Oct. 13 and continue through Nov. 19. The championship game is set for Nov. 21.

FALL INSTRUCTIONAL LEAGUE ROSTER

The Braves opened Fall Instructional League workouts Sept. 17. Games started on Sept. 22 and will continue through Oct. 17 at the Disney Wide World of Sports complex in Kissimmee.

PITCHERS (20)
Brandon Beachy
Caleb Brewer
Michael Broadway
Yeliar Castro
Jaye Chapman
Paul Clemens
Kyle Cofield
Erik Cordier
Dimasther Delgado
Randall Delgado
Brett DeVall
Mike Minor
Brett Oberholtzer
Benino Pruneda
Cole Rohrbough
Zeke Spruill
Tyler Stovall
Richard Sullivan
Julio Teheran
Ryan Weber

CATCHERS (5)
Christian Bethancourt
Matt Kennelly
Braeden Schlehuber
Jesus Sucre
Jace Whitmer

INFIELDERS (8)
Yoel Campusano
Jakob Dalfonso
Mycal Jones
Cole Miles
Jordan Kreke
Alberto Odreman
Riann Spanjer-Furstenburg
Matt Weaver

OUTFIELDERS (6)
Juan Flores
Corey Harrilchak
Robert Hefflinger
Cody Johnson
Adam Milligan
Kyle Rose

MANAGER
Paul Runge

PITCHING COACHES
Derrick Lewis
Gabriel Luckert
Marty Reed (1st half)
Derek Botelho (2nd half)

HITTING COACHES
Bobby Moore
Carlos Mendez (1st half)
Rick Albert (2nd half)

who led the Carolina League in 2008 in five offensive categories, including 21 home runs and 93 RBIs, batted .293 with a pair of homers, seven doubles and 12 RBIs in 17 games. He was promoted to Mississippi for the season's final nine games and is planning on playing winter ball in Venezuela to help make up for lost time...

CL managers picked **Johnson** as the league's best power prospect, **Freddie Freeman** as the best defensive first baseman, and **Craig Kimbrel** as having the league's best fastball, according to Baseball America...

The Pelicans continued to receive production from first base after Freeman was promoted to Mississippi on July 3, thanks to the arrival of **Gerry Rodriguez**. The former catcher scored 34 runs and posted 12 home runs and 41 RBIs with Myrtle Beach. Combined with his numbers at Rome, Rodriguez ranked second in the organization with 23 homers and third with 83 RBIs.

ROME
CLASS A

The R-Braves went 31-38 in the second half of the South Atlantic League season and 66-73 overall... **J.J. Hoover** ranked fourth in the league with 148 strikeouts and concluded the season on a strong note. The right-handed pitcher posted a 3-1 record with a 2.01 ERA in five outings during August. Hoover fanned 36 in 31 1/3 innings during the month...

Mike Minor gave up one run in four starts with Rome, but that lone run tagged him with the loss in his only decision. The lefthander tossed a combined five scoreless innings in his first two outings before giving up the one run and three hits over four innings vs. Savannah on Aug. 29. In his final start, on Sept. 3, Minor scattered five hits over five shutout innings while striking out nine...

Righthander **Moises Hernandez** looked strong in seven games with Rome, going 1-0 with a 3.52 ERA, prior to being promoted to Myrtle Beach, where he allowed 12 earned runs, 12 hits and three walks in three innings. Hernandez, the older brother of Seattle pitcher Felix Hernandez, missed most of 2008 and 2009 after undergoing surgery on his right shoulder. He was a starter prior to the injury but is now working exclusively as a reliever...

Dimasther Delgado did not allow a hit until Charleston's Addison Maruszak reached on a swinging bunt in the seventh inning on Aug. 31. The lefthander gave up two hits in seven shutout innings to earn his fifth win of the season. Two starts earlier, on Aug. 19 vs. Charleston, Delgado allowed only two hits and no runs in 6 2/3 innings...

Julio Teheran threw seven no-hit innings against Charleston on Sept. 2, and **Angelo Paulino** followed and did not give up a hit until the 10th, yet the R-Braves still wound up on the wrong end of a 4-0, 13-inning loss to the Riverdogs...

Catcher **Matt Kennelly**, who batted .255 with Rome, has been selected to play for Australia in the World Cup. Kennelly headed for Europe to join his team immediately after the R-Braves' season concluded... Infielder **Derek Wiley** was promoted from Danville during the final week of August after hitting .231 in the Appalachian League. He was drafted by the Braves in the 31st round in June.

DANVILLE

ROOKIE ADVANCED

First baseman **Riaan Spanjer-Furstenburg**, the Appalachian League's Player of the Year who was the Braves' 16th-round draft pick in June out of Nova Southeastern University, impressed scouts with a disciplined approach at the plate and above-average power. The South Africa native played cricket and rugby prior to moving to Florida in grade school. In addi-

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THE DOOR IS CLOSING MORE EVERY SEASON

THIS HAS BEEN a great year for the team and me. For the past two or three years, I've missed the vast majority of the season due to injuries. I had surgery on my foot last year and missed eight weeks, and broke my thumb a couple of years ago and missed two-and-a-half months. So, to break a small piece of a bone in my thumb in July this season and only miss a little over three weeks was a blessing.

EDITOR'S NOTE

This was Wes Timmons' eighth season in professional baseball and his third full season at the Triple-A level. Drafted by the Braves out of Bethune-Cookman in the 12th round in 2002, Timmons, who turned 30 July 12, has been the quintessential team player and took his performance to another level this year. He not only helped get Gwinnett to the International League playoffs, but he also was named by his teammates as the team MVP for hitting .283 while splitting time mainly between first base and third base.

It's been great being an everyday guy. For the majority of the season, I hit in the two hole, and I knew it was my duty to get on base in front of our big guys. I take a lot of pride in doing that type of job.

Our manager, Dave Brundage, was great about letting me play different positions, which I feel can't hurt my chances to reach Atlanta. I believe he's gone out of his way to open every door and possibility for me. I feel like I can play first, second or third any time.

It also helps having such a good working relationship with Brundy. We know what to expect from each other, and our hitting coach, Jamie Dismuke, has been awesome to work with. I've felt a rejuvenation after coming from Richmond, and everything proved to be a great combination for everyone here.

> "TO BE NAMED THE TEAM MVP WAS A GREAT HONOR... WITHOUT A DOUBT, I'M HUMBLED BY IT."

Obviously, the older you get, that door that looked so wide-open when you were drafted starts to close a little bit more every year. Every year that you get older and find yourself still fighting in the minor leagues, you try not to take so many things for granted. A good example is playing in the post-season this year.

In Triple-A, I've seen so many guys come and go, which has given me a sense of reality. For instance, when Kelly Johnson got sent down earlier this season, he handled it more professionally than anyone I've seen. He came here to work. Too often you see a guy get sent down, and the bitterness comes with him. The way Kelly handled it made me want to carry myself in a similar manner. I want other guys to look at me and see how much I enjoy playing this game.

The possibility of retiring has been a serious thought over the past several years. I have two children back home in Jacksonville, and providing for my family is a major concern. This past season was my first as a free agent, and thanks to the Braves' generosity, I was able to earn a little more money. At the same time, I missed not having the ability to be with my family for the five months of the season. Every year I've had to weigh the realistic possibilities of making it to the big leagues and determine whether or not I was chasing a dream that was quickly fading.

What was so great about this team is we had 25 guys trying to win. If you're playing baseball, I don't care what level or what age you are, you want to win. That's when that childhood competitiveness comes out, and that's what makes this such a great game to play.

To be named the team MVP was a great honor. There are so many guys who deserved it, guys like Brooks Conrad and Brandon Jones and Barbaro Canizares and several others. Without a doubt, I'm humbled by it.

FARM STATISTICS

FINAL

GWINNETT 81-63

INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE TRIPLE A | GWINNETT STADIUM (678) 277-0300

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Barton, Brian (OF)	.266	114	369	47	98	17	4	7	46	45	101	17
Blanco, Gregor (OF)	.228	90	333	54	76	9	1	2	30	50	70	10
Boscan, J.C. (C)	.250	13	44	5	11	4	0	0	2	2	9	0
Burke, Chris (SS/2B)	.285	73	274	39	78	19	2	3	32	22	46	13
Canizares, Barbaro (1B)	.294	130	506	55	149	31	2	12	79	52	67	2
Colina, Alvin (C)	.262	67	225	31	59	12	0	8	42	25	55	1
Conrad, Brooks (INF)	.269	110	398	66	107	25	0	12	64	53	108	13
Hernandez, Diory (SS)	.319	54	204	18	65	16	1	1	32	21	34	8
Heyward, Jason (OF)	.364	3	11	3	4	0	0	0	2	2	2	1
Holt, J.C. (2B/OF)	.282	81	266	44	75	12	3	0	30	27	50	14
Jones, Brandon (OF)	.281	107	384	50	108	28	2	7	57	50	76	6
Kirkland, Kody (INF)	.289	13	38	5	11	2	0	1	2	4	13	1
Perez, Antonio (INF)	.190	49	126	18	24	5	2	1	8	13	23	4
Pope, Van (3B)	.202	106	322	39	65	15	0	4	28	33	62	2
Sammons, Clint (C)	.214	80	299	34	64	12	0	9	37	20	61	7
Timmons, Wes (INF)	.283	105	322	62	91	20	2	1	31	62	36	12

PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Acosta, Manny	1-3	2.63	18	0	2	27.1	21	8	8	13	25	.210
Brownlie, Bobby	5-2	4.13	14	7	0	56.2	60	26	26	17	47	.276
Bueno, Francisley	4-1	3.13	33	5	1	54.2	47	21	19	21	33	.234
Gamble, Jerome	1-3	5.60	6	4	0	17.2	25	24	11	13	17	.329
Gomez, Mariano	8-4	1.99	47	0	8	72.1	51	18	16	29	36	.203
Halama, John	4-7	4.48	16	13	0	90.1	92	47	45	33	54	.267
Heath, Deunte	0-1	9.64	7	2	0	18.2	27	21	20	12	18	.325
Huber, Jon	4-0	4.25	27	0	1	42.1	44	20	20	7	42	.262
Lyman, Jeff	0-2	4.91	5	2	0	11.0	11	6	6	10	11	.244
Nunez, Vladimir	3-2	2.16	45	2	5	83.1	69	23	20	37	79	.227
Parr, James	1-1	5.40	7	6	0	30.0	34	18	18	5	20	.286
Perez, Juan	2-4	3.47	47	0	1	57.0	40	28	22	36	59	.191
Redmond, Todd	9-6	4.41	27	24	0	145.0	152	85	71	47	106	.269
Reyes, Jo-Jo	4-2	2.86	15	14	0	66.0	68	23	21	24	32	.318
Valdez, Luis	5-4	3.28	58	0	27	71.1	66	37	26	19	75	.285
Venters, Jonny	4-7	5.62	17	17	0	91.1	103	64	57	42	58	.248

MISSISSIPPI 65-73

SOUTHERN LEAGUE DOUBLE A | TRUSTMARK PARK (601) 664-7600

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Boscan, J.C. (C)	.260	73	250	20	65	12	0	0	30	33	50	2
Britton, Phillip (C)	.222	39	126	9	28	10	0	0	12	6	24	1
Cabrera, Willie (OF)	.275	107	371	44	102	19	2	8	53	33	51	3
Camarena, Jose (C)	.157	32	89	3	14	4	0	0	7	7	15	1
Campbell, Eric (3B)	.241	104	369	28	89	16	1	5	38	36	56	1
Creek, Greg (1B/3B)	.234	104	320	26	75	14	1	5	42	25	65	2
Freeman, Freddie (1B)	.248	41	149	15	37	8	0	2	24	11	19	0
Guzman, Javier (2B)	.087	12	23	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	4	0
Heyward, Jason (OF)	.352	47	162	32	57	13	4	7	30	28	19	5
Hicks, Brandon (SS)	.237	128	464	63	110	25	4	10	48	53	131	17
Jones, Travis (2B)	.249	121	366	41	91	22	1	5	40	50	93	23
Kirkland, Kody (INF)	.201	92	264	33	53	13	3	3	20	20	63	4
Marcial, Robert (INF)	.077	4	13	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	7	1
Perez, Antonio (2B)	.333	3	12	3	4	0	0	1	1	0	3	0
Rodriguez, Concepcion (OF)	.263	116	395	43	104	19	1	3	32	29	69	9
Young, Matt (OF)	.289	130	460	81	133	22	10	4	33	94	59	42

PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Butts, Brett	7-3	2.58	53	0	5	73.1	63	23	21	36	68	.233
Cofield, Kyle	10-5	3.90	26	24	0	140.2	122	74	61	89	87	.236
Cruz, Rafael	0-2	4.76	22	0	12	22.2	27	13	12	8	20	.290
Diamond, Scott	5-10	3.50	23	23	0	131.0	152	68	51	53	111	.294
Dumesnil, Bryan	1-7	4.41	38	0	2	49.0	46	28	24	28	55	.250
Gamble, Jerome	2-1	3.05	29	1	3	44.1	33	20	15	24	44	.206
Gearrin, Cory	1-2	2.84	20	0	2	25.1	19	9	8	8	20	.213
Gunderson, Kevin	1-3	2.55	42	0	2	49.1	45	14	14	20	38	.247
Gustafson, Tim	2-3	3.79	20	7	1	61.2	57	29	26	32	49	.249
Heath, Deunte	2-5	4.16	25	12	1	80.0	80	43	37	38	70	.260
Lyman, Jeff	5-7	3.12	33	8	0	86.2	70	36	30	43	76	.218
Marek, Stephen	3-3	5.72	38	0	2	39.1	40	31	25	29	31	.267
Ortegano, Jose	5-2	2.83	8	8	0	47.2	46	19	15	15	42	.247
Osuna, Edgar	4-4	3.72	13	12	0	77.1	74	38	32	21	49	.251
Reynoso, Ryne	7-9	3.47	25	24	0	148.0	127	66	57	59	89	.236
Venters, Jonny	4-4	2.76	12	12	0	65.1	60	24	20	35	40	.251

MYRTLE BEACH 53-84

CAROLINA LEAGUE ADVANCED A | BB&T COASTAL FIELD (843) 918-6002

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Davis, Quentin (OF)	.227	17	66	8	15	2	2	0	3	4	11	1
Fisher, Michael (2B)	.238	113	425	50	101	17	1	2	31	32	99	4
Gress, Randy (INF)	.194	63	196	16	38	7	0	3	14	15	50	2
Johnson, Benji (C)	.221	61	199	18	44	10	0	7	30	20	63	2
Johnson, Cody (OF)	.242	122	422	59	102	18	1	32	84	64	171	10
Kennelly, Mathew (C)	.195	47	159	13	31	4	0	1	6	14	44	0
Lee, C.J. (OF)	.239	89	289	40	69	15	3	4	19	21	85	8
Linares, Donell (3B)	.287	130	505	63	145	32	1	15	87	22	41	5
Lundahl, Chad (INF)	.157	60	204	15	32	8	0	2	12	6	34	1
Marcial, Robert (INF)	.195	67	215	23	42	3	0	3	17	10	51	6
Mejia, Ernesto (1B)	.293	17	58	8	17	7	0	3	12	4	16	0
Miles, Cole (OF/2B)	.266	119	421	64	112	6	7	4	27	43	70	16
Owings, Jon (OF)	.198	60	202	18	40	9	4	2	15	13	65	3
Rodriguez, Gerardo (1B)	.281	60	224	34	63	9	2	12	41	15	72	4
Shehan, Chris (OF)	.261	39	138	15	36	15	0	1	6	5	38	3
Sucre, Jesus (C)	.259	53	197	17	51	8	1	5	20	8	33	3

PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Beachy, Brandon	4-3	3.41	22	8	1	58.0	59	31	22	15	47	.267
Broadway, Michael	2-7	4.50	35	1	0	58.0	59	32	29	36	53	.266
Chapman, Jaye	1-2	4.33	27	0	0	35.1	35	19	17	20	37	.257
Cordier, Erik	7-8	3.87	25	25	0	121.0	115	62	52	74	88	.257
Currin, Pat	1-0	3.28	20	0	1	24.2	28	10	9	11	20	.272
Darrow, Rudy	3-0	6.07	24	0	0	29.2	37	22	20	19	26	.314
Gearrin, Cory	0-2	1.84	27	0	17	29.1	22	6	6	3	32	.198
Gustafson, Tim	0-0	2.03	10	0	0	13.1	15	7	3	7	8	.278
Hyde, Lee	3-1	1.21	17	0	1	22.1	13	4	3	9	28	.163
Kimbrel, Craig	0-2	5.47	19	0	2	26.1	18	19	16	28	45	.200
Osuna, Edgar	3-6	4.33	14	14	0	72.2	82	40	35	14	56	.275
Palica, Thomas	5-1	3.31	41	0	6	51.2	46	24	19	21	59	.238
Pruneda, Benino	2-3	5.47	36	0	3	51.0	54	35	31	32	64	.273
Rohrbough, Cole	6-8	5.77	23	22	0	117.0	129	80	75	48	100	.280
Sullivan, Richard	2-12	4.25	19	19	0	112.1	115	66	53	39	80	.266
Thompson, Jacob	5-4	3.57	16	14	0	90.2	88	40	36	42	78	.260

ROME 66-73

SOUTH ATLANTIC LEAGUE CLASS A | STATE MUTUAL STADIUM (706) 368-9388

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Barba, Ryan (SS)	.201	120	378	41	76	20	0	2	30	26	74	4
Campusano, Yoel (2B)	.288	103	382	55	110	15	4	5	35	28	52	13
Culver, Calvin (OF)	.225	86	316	28	71	20	0	4	29	22	62	2
Fuller, Chais (INF)	.207	77	246	21	51	11	1	1	25	15	51	2
Kennelly, Mathew (C)	.255	46	157	11	40	7	0	1	16	13	36	1
Miles, Kuyaunnis (OF)	.279	14	43	4	12	3	0	0	1	1	17	1
Milligan, Adam (OF)	.345	52	197	28	68	14	2	10	33	12	43	4
Moody, Shayne (INF)	.262	84	298	37	78	9	0	1	28	22	43	11
Rodriguez, Gerardo (1B)	.258	63	240	29	62	9	5	11	42	12	69	4
Santamaria, Jahdiel (OF)	.274	62	212	26	58	8	2	0	14	12	37	5
Schlehuber, Braeden (C)	.199	100	351	41	70	23	0	5	37	18	59	5
Shehan, Chris (OF)	.248	66	214	32	53	9	2	2	19	17	53	6
Shults, Stephen (1B/3B/OF)	.228	67	232	24	53	16	0	4	21	14	68	2
Sime, Samuel (INF)	.242	108	368	47	89	18	4	2	27	23	79	13
Sucre, Jesus (C)	.325	45	169	14	55	15	0	1	18	6	17	1
Sumoza, Luis (OF)	.271	119	461	48	125	27	2	4	47	28	100	8

PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Castro, Yeliar	4-4	4.50	31	3	1	64.0	59	36	32	32	73	.250
Clemens, Paul	6-5	5.91	26	11	3	85.1	105	67	56	49	64	.296
Delgado, Dimaster	5-7	3.61	17	17	0	99.2	89	43	40	26	104	.237
Delgado, Randall	5-10	4.35	25	25	0	124.0	123	70	60	49	141	.256
DeVall, Brett	4-4	3.52	10	10	0	53.2	50	22	21	14	41	.245
Francis, David	5-7	3.67	30	6	3	88.1	101	43	36	30	73	.293
Hoover, J.J.	7-6	3.35	25	18	1	134.1	135	58	50	25	148	.259
Kimbrel, Craig	0-0	0.90	16	0	10	20.0	9	2	2	6	38	.132
McMillan, Clayton	2-3	3.32	35	0	1	38.0	46	22	14	13	32	.303
Minor, Mike	0-1	0.64	4	4	0	14.0	10	1	1	0	17	.208
Paulino, Angelo	6-4	2.67	37	0	2	64.0	58	28	19	27	78	.233
Small, Matthew	1-3	3.41	25	0	6	34.1	25	13	13	13	36	.203
Spruill, Zeke	8-6	3.03	20	19	1	116.0	120	54	39	24	95	.261
Sullivan, Richard	4-1	3.72	5	5	0	29.0	37	18	12	5	27	.306
Teheran, Julio	1-3	4.78	7	7	0	37.2	42	20	20	11	28	.288
Thompson, Jacob	2-5	5.20	11	11	0	64.0	74	41	37	14	41	.298

DANVILLE 47-21

APPALACHIAN LEAGUE
ROOKIE ADVANCED

LEGION FIELD
(434) 797-3792

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Adair, Travis (2B)	.206	36	102	12	21	3	1	0	13	11	14	3
Bethancourt, Christian (C)	.260	14	50	10	13	5	0	2	8	6	16	1
Elorriaga-Matra, Daniel (C)	.127	38	110	9	14	7	0	0	8	7	34	0
Gress, Randy (INF)	.324	10	37	7	12	3	1	0	8	2	7	0
Harrilchak, Cory (OF)	.324	60	222	43	72	10	5	2	41	27	22	19
Hefflinger, Robert (OF)	.242	61	240	23	58	11	1	7	37	16	76	1
Jones, Mycal (SS)	.258	64	244	50	63	18	6	4	27	26	55	19
Kreke, Jordan (3B)	.271	63	218	35	59	10	1	2	15	23	32	2
Marval, Osman (C/1B)	.297	37	118	17	35	10	0	1	20	9	12	1
Miles, Kuyaunnis (OF)	.197	30	76	10	15	2	1	2	6	4	30	1
Rauh, Bobby (OF)	.229	29	83	15	19	6	1	0	8	8	31	9
Spanjer-Furstenburg, Riaan (1B)	.359	62	234	36	84	19	0	8	53	16	37	0
Ware, L.V. (OF)	.293	62	249	40	73	16	5	0	24	12	39	24
Weaver, Matthew (2B)	.291	35	110	11	32	5	0	1	16	4	27	4
Whitmer, Jace (C)	.242	25	95	8	23	4	0	0	5	4	28	1
Wiley, Derek (1B)	.231	25	65	10	15	3	0	2	5	2	17	0

PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Accomando, Dennis	0-0	6.75	9	1	0	14.2	16	12	11	8	6	.271
Avilan, Luis	0-2	3.05	14	3	2	38.1	25	14	13	17	34	.185
Berryhill, Thomas	1-1	2.55	16	0	6	17.2	15	5	5	9	12	.231
Bullard, Adam	0-1	6.92	6	0	0	13.0	13	16	10	10	12	.245
Crim, Matthew	10-2	3.18	13	11	0	68.0	70	26	24	10	48	.265
Harris, Tyrelle	0-0	1.59	3	0	1	5.2	5	1	1	0	9	.227
Himpsl, Derick	3-0	5.48	14	0	1	21.1	17	17	13	22	35	.198
Hodges, Casey	2-0	2.75	14	0	6	19.2	20	10	6	11	17	.247
Lorick, Jeffrey	2-1	4.09	17	3	3	33.0	30	17	15	13	42	.236
Masters, Christopher	8-4	1.42	13	11	0	69.2	53	17	11	9	85	.206
Mora, Edigson	0-1	3.55	5	1	1	12.2	17	6	5	3	12	.309
Oberholtzer, Brett	6-2	2.01	12	12	0	67.0	46	17	15	6	56	.191
Railsback, Cody	1-0	1.93	8	0	1	9.1	5	2	2	5	8	.147
Rasmus, Cory	4-2	3.48	13	6	1	51.2	34	21	20	26	57	.189
Stovall, Tyler	3-2	3.12	12	12	0	52.0	36	22	18	56	57	.202
Surinach, Julio	2-1	3.07	14	0	3	44.0	35	15	15	16	36	.224

GULF COAST 26-34

GULF COAST LEAGUE
ROOKIE

CHAMPION STADIUM AT DISNEY
(407) 939-2301

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Bethancourt, Christian (C)	.284	32	116	22	33	9	1	2	19	11	22	7
Blanco, Elys (2B)	.240	34	75	17	18	1	0	0	3	13	20	9
Contreras, Luis (OF)	.182	44	77	9	14	2	0	0	8	13	19	3
Dalfonso, Jakob (3B)	.259	41	139	19	36	7	0	0	19	10	20	7
De Los Santos, Fernando (SS/2B)	.229	36	105	15	24	4	2	1	12	7	25	1
Falcon, Daniel (OF)	.257	45	148	13	38	7	2	3	15	7	42	2
Feliz, Anthony	.261	46	142	20	37	9	2	2	10	8	26	4
Hanson, Jake	.279	44	129	26	36	9	2	3	14	19	39	4
Hiller, Layton	.274	53	197	25	54	17	0	8	45	5	62	2
Kramer, Matt	.254	29	63	11	16	3	0	4	10	1	14	0
Linger, Jim	.273	41	132	15	36	4	1	2	8	9	11	3
Lovett, Christopher	.231	35	104	12	24	7	1	1	12	13	16	2
Mejia, Ernesto	.214	10	28	3	6	1	0	1	3	3	5	0
Odreman, Alberto	.251	55	195	24	49	3	1	9	29	12	47	1
Payne, Mike	.282	17	39	4	11	1	0	0	3	1	8	0
Rose, Kyle	.282	47	142	26	40	4	1	1	10	20	21	26

PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Acord, Joshua	1-1	2.92	9	0	1	12.1	6	4	4	8	18	.140
Alvarez, Danilo	1-2	3.79	13	0	1	19.0	16	9	8	4	18	.235
Brewer, Caleb	3-3	2.82	12	10	0	44.2	20	14	14	31	65	.132
Escobar, Reidy	1-1	4.26	11	0	1	19.0	21	10	9	7	21	.276
Estevez, Wilton	0-2	4.03	13	0	2	22.1	15	10	10	14	30	.188
Farrell, Kyle	0-3	6.92	12	5	0	39.0	44	37	30	19	31	.284
Hayes, Jamie	1-0	0.61	12	0	4	14.2	12	4	1	2	11	.226
Huang, Wei	2-1	3.18	12	0	0	17.0	17	6	6	6	11	.246
La Point, Lucas	1-4	4.15	11	3	0	26.0	29	17	12	18	22	.271
Lopez, Robinson	3-1	1.29	11	8	0	48.2	41	13	7	12	42	.229
Niekro, Lance	1-3	5.61	14	4	0	33.2	37	34	21	17	22	.280
Northcraft, Aaron	1-2	4.50	11	10	0	40.0	33	26	20	21	31	.229
Pacheco, Ronan	1-4	4.54	11	6	0	33.2	39	25	17	13	31	.289
Perez, Carlos	1-2	5.28	10	5	0	30.2	35	23	18	13	23	.292
Spruill, Zeke	1-0	4.58	4	4	0	19.2	24	15	10	5	23	.289
Wilson, Andrew	2-3	4.82	12	0	2	18.2	19	10	10	8	22	.253

tion to winning the league's batting crown with a .359 average and leading the league with 84 hits, Spanjer-Furstenburg ranked third in on-base percentage (.411), slugging percentage (.543), RBIs (53) and doubles (19) and fourth with 27 extra-base hits...

Outfielder **Cory Harrilchak**, who ranked fifth in the league with 41 RBIs and tied for sixth with a .324 batting average, joined Spanjer-Furstenburg on the Appy League's year-end all-star team...

Shortstop **Mycal Jones** paced the league with 50 runs scored and six triples while ranking third with 28 extra-base hits and fifth with 18 doubles. Outfielder **L.V. Ware** led the league with 24 stolen bases and ranked third with 73 hits...

Matt Crim was named to the Appy League's year-end all-star team as the left-handed pitcher. Crim, the Braves' 21st-round pick in June out of The Citadel, won a league-best 10 games against two losses while posting a 3.18 ERA. Only six pitchers in the rookie-level league's history have posted more than 10 wins. Though not overpowering, Crim throws low strikes, which forces batters to hit the ball on the ground...

Righthander **Chris Masters**, Atlanta's 11th-round pick in June out of Western Carolina, led the league with 85 strikeouts, ranked second with eight wins and a 1.42 ERA, and placed fourth with 69 2/3 innings pitched. **Brett Oberholtzer** tied for third in the league with six victories...

Cory Rasmus, who missed most of the past two years with shoulder problems, posted his first extended success during the 2009 season, including an impressive finish. Rasmus was named Appalachian League Pitcher of the Week for Aug. 10-16 for going 2-0 with no hits allowed in 12 innings. The Braves' supplemental first-round pick in 2006 tossed a seven-inning no-hitter in the first game of a doubleheader at Princeton on Aug. 11, allowing only one walk and striking out nine. Rasmus won his last three decisions to finish 4-2 with a save and a 3.48 ERA in 17 games. In 51 2/3 innings, he gave up only 34 hits while striking out 57.

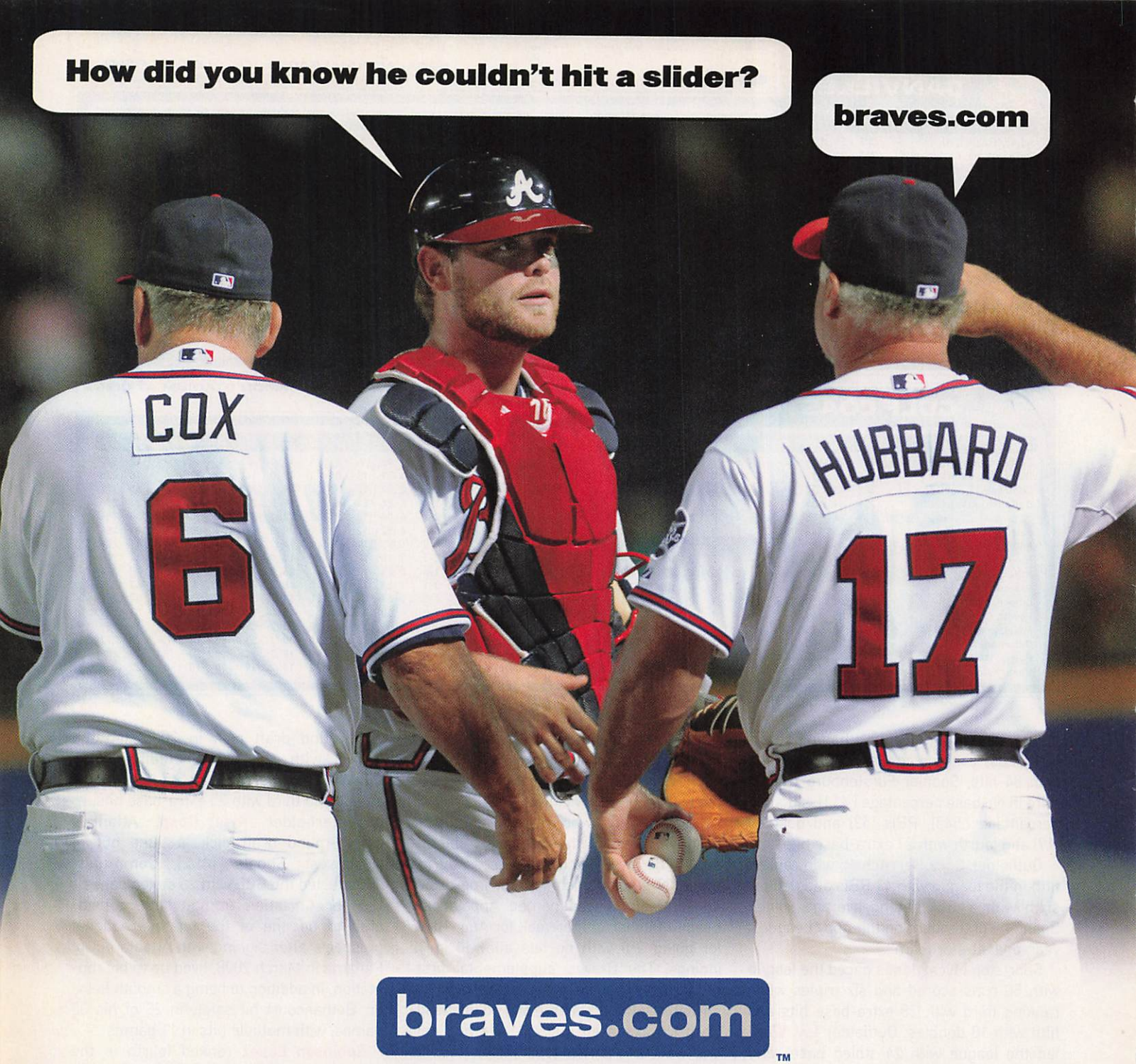
GULF COAST ROOKIE

The Braves finished in sixth place in the GCL North Division with a 26-34 record... The Braves had the top two home run hitters in the league, with first baseman **Alberto Odreman** leading the league with nine homers and leftfielder **Layton Hiller** ranking second with eight. Hiller, Atlanta's 15th-round draft pick in 2008, led the league with 45 RBIs (including 24 in August), tied for second with 17 doubles and placed third with 25 extra-base hits...

Centerfielder **Kyle Rose**, Atlanta's eighth-round draft pick in June out of Northwest Shoals (Ala.) Community College, led the GCL with 26 stolen bases... Catcher **Christian Bethancourt**, considered to be one of the top international prospects after signing with Atlanta out of Panama in March 2008, lived up to his reputation. In addition to being a smooth fielder, Bethancourt hit safely in 20 of his 32 games, with multiple hits in 11 games...

Robinson Lopez ranked fourth in the GCL with a 1.29 ERA. The righthander, who signed out of the Dominican Republic in November 2008, went 3-1 with only 41 hits allowed in 48 2/3 innings. The 18-year-old also struck out 42...

Caleb Brewer, a 14th-round draft pick in 2007, overpowered GCL hitters, limiting them to a .132 batting average and leading the league with 65 strikeouts. Brewer's 11 strikeouts in six innings vs. the Yankees on Aug. 19 was the second-highest single-game total in the league this season. The righthander, who missed all of 2008 with a hip injury, walked 31, tied for second highest in the league.



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Braves INDIVIDUAL STATS

THROUGH 9/13/09

BATTERS	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	TB	BB	SO	SB	CS	OBP	SLG	E
DIAZ	.320	111	322	52	103	17	4	10	48	158	29	75	9	5	.394	.491	2
ESCOBAR	.303	123	462	76	140	24	1	14	68	208	50	54	4	3	.379	.450	12
PRADO	.291	110	375	46	109	25	0	9	42	161	30	49	0	3	.342	.429	7
INFANTE	.290	55	162	21	47	6	1	2	22	61	18	24	2	0	.359	.377	3
McCANN	.281	119	430	55	121	34	1	18	79	211	40	69	3	1	.344	.491	10
ANDERSON	.275	116	422	45	116	22	0	12	54	174	23	65	1	0	.311	.412	3
CHURCH	.275	106	349	46	96	28	0	4	39	136	32	55	6	2	.339	.390	2
ATL	.265	39	117	20	31	12	0	2	17	49	15	19	0	0	.353	.419	1
CONRAD	.275	19	40	6	11	1	2	2	8	22	2	7	0	0	.326	.550	0
RIGHT	.400		5		2	0	0	1	2	5	1	1			.500	1.000	
LEFT	.257		35		9	1	2	1	6	17	1	6			.297	.486	
LaROCHE	.274	126	468	69	128	30	2	22	67	228	59	123	2	2	.352	.487	2
ATL	.333	39	144	23	48	5	1	10	27	85	18	42	0	0	.402	.590	1
McLOUTH	.270	110	429	72	116	24	2	18	62	198	55	80	17	3	.358	.462	1
ATL	.280	65	261	45	73	17	1	9	28	119	34	51	10	3	.365	.456	1
JONES	.269	126	431	70	116	20	2	16	64	188	89	76	4	1	.391	.436	21
RIGHT	.283		145		41	9	1	8	29	76	21	25			.369	.524	
LEFT	.262		286		75	11	1	8	35	112	68	51			.401	.392	
ROSS	.258	48	120	17	31	8	0	7	18	60	20	38	0	0	.364	.500	1
JOHNSON	.222	97	288	46	64	19	3	8	26	113	31	52	7	2	.303	.392	9
GORECKI	.217	20	23	3	5	0	0	0	3	5	1	10	1	0	.240	.217	1
SCHAFER	.204	50	167	18	34	8	0	2	8	48	27	63	2	1	.313	.287	0
SAMMONS	.200	4	5	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	.333	.200	0
NORTON	.145	86	69	3	10	2	0	0	6	12	18	19	0	0	.330	.174	0
RIGHT	.308		13		4	1	0	0	3	5	3	4			.438	.385	
LEFT	.107		56		6	1	0	0	3	7	15	15			.306	.125	
ATLANTA	.263	143	4,877	643	1,284	260	19	134	613	1,984	525	934	50	22	.337	.407	89
OPPONENTS	.255	143	4,835	575	1,234	261	43	100	553	1,881	465	1,076	88	38	.324	.389	78

PINCH-HITTERS (AVG-H-HR-RBI) **Church** (.667-2-1-2), **Jones** (.500-3-0-5), **Escobar** (.500-1-0-1), **Infante** (.429-3-0-1), **Prado** (.400-4-0-3), Johnson (.385-5-0-1), **McCann** (.333-3-0-1), **Anderson** (.273-3-1-4), **Diaz** (.267-4-0-1), **Norton** (.164-10-0-6), **Conrad** (.125-1-1-3), **Ross** (.000-0-0-0), **Kawakami** (.000-0-0-0), **Medlen** (.000-0-0-0), **Vazquez** (.000-0-0-0). **TEAM** (.246-50-2-36).

PITCHERS (AVG-H-HR-RBI) **Hudson** (.200-1-1-2), **Vazquez** (.194-12-0-3), **Lowe** (.188-9-0-1), **Jurrjens** (.123-70-4), **Kawakami** (.103-4-0-0), **Hanson** (.063-2-0-1), **Acosta** (.000-0-0-0), **Carlyle** (.000-0-0-0), **Medlen** (.000-0-0-0), **Moylan** (.000-0-0-0), **O'Flaherty** (.000-0-0-0). **STAFF** (.133-35-1-11).

KEY

AVG-Batting average, SLG-Slugging percentage, OBP-On-base percentage, G-Games, AB-At-bats, R-Runs, H-Hits, 2B-Doubles, 3B-Triples, HR-Home runs, RBI-Runs batted in, TB-Total bases, BB-Walks, SO-Strikeouts, SB-Stolen bases, CS-Caught stealing, E-Errors, W-L-Wins-Losses, ERA-Earned run average, GS-Starts, GF-Games finished, SV-Saves, IP-Innings pitched, HB-Hit batters, WP-Wild pitches, OBA-Opponents' batting average.

PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	G	GS	GF	SV	IP	H	R	ER	HR	HB	BB	SO	WP	OBA
GONZALEZ	4-4	2.51	73	0	29	10	68	51	27	19	6	7	31	84	4	.209
SORIANO	1-5	2.71	67	0	44	24	66.1	45	20	20	5	1	22	88	0	.190
JURRJENS	11-10	2.81	30	30	0	0	186	165	66	58	14	3	66	133	2	.243
HANSON	9-3	2.83	17	17	0	0	101.2	86	33	32	9	5	36	85	2	.230
MOYLAN	6-2	2.94	79	0	6	0	64.1	60	27	21	0	2	29	53	1	.254
VAZQUEZ	13-9	3.01	29	29	0	0	197.1	167	69	66	18	3	40	216	5	.228
O'FLAHERTY	1-1	3.21	68	0	4	0	47.2	44	21	17	1	4	17	33	2	.244
HUDSON	1-0	3.63	3	3	0	0	17.1	20	7	7	0	0	5	12	0	.290
KAWAKAMI	7-11	4.02	27	25	2	0	145.2	141	71	65	15	6	55	99	7	.256
CAMPILLO	1-0	4.15	5	0	4	0	4.1	7	3	2	0	0	3	3	0	.389
ACOSTA	1-0	4.32	31	0	15	0	33.1	39	17	16	3	2	16	28	2	.291
LOWE	14-9	4.47	30	30	0	0	177	206	94	88	11	4	54	97	3	.297
MEDLEN	3-5	4.68	30	4	9	0	57.2	58	32	30	5	2	28	67	3	.265
LOGAN	1-0	5.17	17	0	6	0	15.2	18	11	9	1	0	7	8	0	.281
CARLYLE	0-1	8.86	16	0	7	0	21.1	35	23	21	5	0	12	12	2	.380
ATLANTA	75-68	3.65	143	143	141	34	1,282.2	1,234	575	520	100	45	465	1,076	34	.255
OPPONENTS	68-75	4.10	143	143	140	34	1,283.1	1,284	643	584	134	42	525	934	32	.263

GAME BY GAME

GAME	DATE	OPP	H/A	W-L	SCORE	W/L PITCHER	ATL HRs	REC	POS	GB
1	4/5	PHI	A	W	4-1	Lowe (1-0)	McCann (1), Francoeur (1), Schafer (1)	1-0	1	+½
2	4/7	PHI	A	W	4-0	Jurrjens (1-0)	Johnson (1), Jones (1)	2-0	T-1	—
3	4/8	PHI	A	L	11-12	Boyer (0-1)	McCann (2), Schafer (2), Diaz (1)	2-1	3	-1
4	4/10	WAS	H	W	6-5 (10)	Campillo (1-0)	Escobar (1)	3-1	2	-1
5	4/11	WAS	H	W	5-3	Kawakami (1-0)	Johnson (2)	4-1	T-1	—
6	4/12	WAS	H	W	8-5	Jurrjens (2-0)	—	5-1	T-1	—
7	4/14	FLA	H	L	1-5	Vazquez (0-1)	Johnson (3)	5-2	2	-1
8	4/15	FLA	H	L	4-10	Moylan (0-1)	--	5-3	2	-2
9	4/16	FLA	H	L	2-6	Kawakami (1-1)	--	5-4	2	-3
10	4/17	PIT	A	L	0-3	Jurrjens (2-1)	--	5-5	T-2	-4
11	4/18	PIT	A	L	0-10	Reyes (0-1)	--	5-6	3	-5
12	4/19	PIT	A	W	11-1	Vazquez (1-1)	Prado (1), Ross (1)	6-6	T-2	-5
13	4/20	WAS	A	L	2-3	Lowe (1-1)	Diaz (2)	6-7	3	-5
14	4/21	WAS	A	L	3-4	Kawakami (1-2)	--	6-8	4	-5
15	4/22	WAS	A	W	1-0	Gonzalez (1-0)	--	7-8	2	-4
16	4/24	CIN	A	W	4-3	Vazquez (2-1)	Francoeur (2)	8-8	2	-3
17	4/25	CIN	A	W	10-2	Lowe (2-1)	Jones (2), Escobar (2)	9-8	2	-2
18	4/26	CIN	A	L	2-8	Kawakami (1-3)	Ross (2)	9-9	3	-2
19	4/27	STL	H	L	2-3	Jurrjens (2-2)	--	9-10	T-3	-2
20	4/28	STL	H	W	2-1	Moylan (1-1)	--	10-10	3	-2
21	4/29	STL	H	L	3-5	Vazquez (2-2)	--	10-11	3	-3
22	5/1	HOU	H	W	7-2	Lowe (3-1)	Francoeur (3)	11-11	3	-2 ½
23	5/2	HOU	H	L	1-5	Carlyle (0-1)	--	11-12	3	-2 ½
24	5/3	HOU	H	L	5-7	Moylan (1-2)	--	11-13	3	-2 ½
25	5/4	NYM	H	L	4-6	Vazquez (2-3)	Jones (3)	11-14	4	-3 ½
26	5/5	NYM	H	L	3-4	Kawakami (1-4)	--	11-15	4	-4
27	5/6	FLA	A	W	8-6	Lowe (4-1)	--	12-15	4	-3
28	5/7	FLA	A	W	4-2	Jurrjens (3-2)	Ross (3), Kotchman (1)	13-15	4	-2
29	5/8	PHI	A	L	6-10	Reyes (0-2)	Infante (1), Kotchman (2)	13-16	4	-3
30	5/9	PHI	A	W	6-2	Vazquez (3-3)	Escobar (3), McCann (3)	14-16	4	-2 ½
31	5/10	PHI	A	W	4-2	Kawakami (2-4)	--	15-16	4	-2 ½
32	5/11	NYM	A	W	8-3	Lowe (5-1)	--	16-16	4	-1 ½
33	5/12	NYM	A	L	3-4 (10)	Bennett (0-1)	--	16-17	4	-2 ½
34	5/13	NYM	A	W	8-7 (12)	Bennett (1-1)	Prado (2)	17-17	4	-1 ½
35	5/15	ARZ	H	W	4-3	Gonzalez (2-0)	Jones (4)	18-17	3	-2
36	5/16	ARZ	H	L	0-12	Kawakami (2-5)	--	18-18	3	-3
37	5/18	COL	H	L	1-5	Lowe (5-2)	--	18-19	3	-2 ½
38	5/19	COL	H	W	8-1	Jurrjens (4-2)	--	19-19	3	-2 ½
39	5/20	COL	H	W	12-4	Vazquez (4-3)	Escobar (4)	20-19	3	-1 ½
40	5/21	COL	H	L	0-9	Medlen (0-1)	--	20-20	3	-2 ½
41	5/22	TOR	H	W	1-0	Kawakami (3-5)	--	21-20	3	-2 ½
42	5/23	TOR	H	W	4-3	Lowe (6-2)	Johnson (4)	22-20	3	-1 ½
43	5/24	TOR	H	W	10-2	Bennett (2-1)	Johnson (5), McCann 2 (5)	23-20	T-2	-1 ½
44	5/25	SF	A	L	2-8	Vazquez (4-4)	--	23-21	3	-1 ½
45	5/26	SF	A	L	0-4	Medlen (0-2)	--	23-22	3	-2 ½
46	5/27	SF	A	L	3-6	Kawakami (3-6)	--	23-23	3	-3
47	5/28	ARZ	A	L	2-5	Lowe (6-3)	--	23-24	3	-3 ½

GAME	DATE	OPP	H/A	W-L	SCORE	W/L PITCHER	ATL HRs	REC	POS	GB
48	5/29	ARZ	A	W	10-6	Jurrjens (5-2)	Escobar (5)	24-24	3	-3 ½
49	5/30	ARZ	A	L	2-3 (11)	Bennett (2-2)	--	24-25	3	-4
50	5/31	ARZ	A	W	9-3	Medlen (1-2)	Jones (5), Anderson (1)	25-25	3	-4
51	6/2	CHC	H	W	6-5 (12)	Soriano (1-0)	Anderson (2), Francoeur (4)	26-25	3	-4 ½
52	6/3	CHC	H	L	2-3 (11)	Bennett (2-2)	--	26-26	3	-5 ½
53	6/5	MIL	H	L	0-4	Jurrjens (5-3)	--	26-27	3	-6
54	6/6	MIL	H	L	0-3	Vazquez (4-5)	--	26-28	3	-6
55	6/7	MIL	H	W	8-7	O'Flaherty (1-0)	Jones 2 (7)	27-28	3	-6
56	6/8	PIT	H	W	7-6 (15)	Medlen (2-2)	Jones (8), McLouth (10), McCann (6)	28-28	3	-5 ½
57	6/9	PIT	H	W	4-3	Lowe (7-3)	--	29-28	3	-4 ½
58	6/10	PIT	H	L	2-3	Jurrjens (5-4)	Anderson (3)	29-29	3	-5 ½
59	6/11	PIT	H	L	1-3	Soriano 1-1)	--	29-30	3	-6 ½
60	6/12	BAL	A	W	7-2	Hansen (1-0)	Escobar (6), Prado (3)	30-30	3	-5 ½
61	6/13	BAL	A	L	4-8	O'Flaherty (1-1)	--	30-31	3	-5 ½
62	6/14	BAL	A	L	2-11	Lowe (7-4)	Ross 2 (5)	30-32	4	-6 ½
63	6/16	CIN	A	L	2-7	Jurrjens (5-5)	--	30-33	4	-6 ½
64	6/17	CIN	A	L	3-4	Vazquez (4-6)	Escobar (7)	30-34	4	-6 ½
65	6/18	CIN	A	W	7-0	Hanson (2-0)	Diaz (3), McLouth (11)	31-34	4	-5 ½
66	6/19	BOS	A	W	8-2	Kawakami (4-6)	McLouth (12)	32-34	3	-4 ½
67	6/20	BOS	A	L	0-3	Lowe (7-5)	--	32-35	4	-4 ½
68	6/21	BOS	A	L	5-6	Bennett (2-4)	--	32-36	4	-4 ½
69	6/22	CHC	H	W	2-0	Vazquez (5-6)	--	33-36	4	-4
70	6/23	NYY	H	W	4-0	Hanson (3-0)	McCann (7)	34-36	4	-4
71	6/24	NYY	H	L	4-8	Medlen (2-3)	Francoeur (5)	34-37	4	-4
72	6/25	NYY	H	L	7-11	Lowe (7-6)	McCann (8)	34-38	4	-4
73	6/26	BOS	H	L	1-4	Jurrjens (5-6)	Ross (6)	34-39	4	-4
74	6/27	BOS	H	L	0-1	Vazquez (5-7)	--	34-40	4	-5
75	6/28	BOS	H	W	2-1	Hanson (4-0)	Jones (9), Anderson (4)	35-40	4	-5
76	6/30	PHI	H	W	5-4 (10)	Moylan (2-2)	Prado (4)	36-40	4	-4
77	7/1	PHI	H	W	11-1	Jurrjens (6-6)	Diaz (4), Hernandez (1)	37-40	4	-3
78	7/2	PHI	H	W	5-2	Gonzalez (3-0)	Kotchman (3), Anderson (5)	38-40	4	-2
79	7/3	WAS	A	W	9-8	Logan (1-0)	Conrad (1)	39-40	T-3	-2
80	7/4	WAS	A	L	3-5	Gonzalez (3-1)	--	39-41	T-3	-3
81	7/5	WAS	A	L	3-5	Lowe (7-7)	McLouth (13)	39-42	T-3	-4
82	7/6	CHC	A	L	2-4	Jurrjens (6-7)	McLouth (14)	39-43	4	-5
83	7/7	CHC	A	W	2-1	Vazquez (6-7)	--	40-43	3	-4
84	7/8	CHC	A	W	4-1	Kawakami (5-6)	Kotchman (4)	41-43	3	-4
85	7/9	COL	A	L	6-7	Gonzalez (3-2)	--	41-44	3	-5
86	7/10	COL	A	W	4-1	Lowe (8-7)	--	42-44	3	-5
87	7/11	COL	A	W	4-3	Jurrjens (7-7)	--	43-44	3	-5
88	7/12	COL	A	L	7-8	Valdez (0-1)	Conrad(2)	43-45	3	-6
89	7/16	NYM	H	W	5-3	Acosta (1-0)	Escobar (8), Anderson (6)	44-45	3	-6
90	7/17	NYM	H	W	11-0	Jurrjens (8-7)	McCann (9), Prado (5)	45-45	T-2	-6
91	7/18	NYM	H	L	1-5	Kawakami (5-7)	Jones (10)	45-46	3	-6 ½
92	7/19	NYM	H	W	7-1	Vazquez (7-7)	Escobar (9)	46-46	2	-6 ½
93	7/20	SF	H	W	11-3	Hanson (5-0)	Anderson (7), Jones (11), Church (3)	47-46	2	-6 ½
94	7/21	SF	H	W	8-1	Lowe (9-7)	McCann (10)	48-46	2	-6 ½
95	7/22	SF	H	W	4-2	Jurrjens (9-7)	Escobar (10)	49-46	2	-5 ½
96	7/23	SF	H	L	1-5	Gonzalez (3-3)	Escobar (11)	49-47	T-2	-6 ½

GAME	DATE	OPP	H/A	W-L	SCORE	W/L PITCHER	ATL HRs	REC	POS	GB
97	7/24	MIL	A	W	9-4	Vazquez (8-7)	Prado (6), Jones (12), McLouth (15)	50-47	T-2	-5 ½
98	7/25	MIL	A	L	0-4	Hanson (5-1)	--	50-48	T-2	-6 ½
99	7/26	MIL	A	W	10-2	Lowe (10-7)	Kotchman (5), McCann (11), Johnson (6)	51-48	T-2	-6 ½
100	7/28	FLA	A	L	3-4	Soriano (1-2)	Jones (13), Anderson (8)	51-49	3	-8
101	7/29	FLA	A	L	3-6	Kawakami (5-8)	Kotchman (6), Anderson (9)	51-50	3	-8
102	7/30	FLA	A	W	6-3 (10)	Moylan (3-2)	McCann (12)	52-50	3	-7
103	7/31	LAD	H	L	0-5	Hanson (5-2)	--	52-51	3	-8
104	8/1	LAD	H	W	4-3	Lowe (11-7)	--	53-51	3	-7
105	8/2	LAD	H	L	1-9	Jurrjens (9-8)	--	53-52	3	-7
106	8/3	SD	A	L	2-4	Kawakami (5-9)	LaRoche (14)	53-53	3	-7 ½
107	8/4	SD	A	W	9-2	Vazquez (9-7)	Prado (7), Diaz (5)	54-53	3	-6 ½
108	8/5	SD	A	W	6-2	Hanson (6-2)	--	55-53	3	-6 ½
109	8/6	LAD	A	L	4-5	Soriano (1-3)	Jones (14)	55-54	3	-7 ½
110	8/7	LAD	A	W	9-5 (12)	Moylan (4-2)	Johnson (7), Church (4)	56-54	3	-6 ½
111	8/8	LAD	A	W	2-1 (10)	Medlen (3-3)	Johnson (8)	57-54	3	-5 ½
112	8/9	LAD	A	W	8-2	Vazquez (10-7)	Diaz (6)	58-54	3	-4 ½
113	8/11	WAS	H	W	8-1	Hanson (7-2)	Jones (15)	59-54	3	-4 ½
114	8/12	WAS	H	W	6-2	Lowe (12-7)	Anderson (10), LaRoche 2 (16), Prado (8)	60-54	T-2	-4 ½
115	8/14	PHI	H	L	2-3	Soriano (1-4)	--	60-55	3	-6
116	8/15	PHI	H	W	4-3	Moylan (5-2)	McCann (13)	61-55	3	-5
117	8/16	PHI	H	L	1-4	Vazquez (10-8)	Diaz (7)	61-56	3	-6
118	8/17	ARZ	H	W	9-4	Hanson (8-2)	Anderson (11), LaRoche (17)	62-56	3	-5 ½
119	8/18	NYM	A	L	4-9	Lowe (12-8)	Diaz (8), LaRoche (18)	62-57	3	-6 ½
120	8/19	NYM	A	W	15-2	Jurrjens (10-8)	McCann (14), LaRoche (19), Diaz (9)	63-57	3	-6 ½
121	8/20	NYM	A	W	3-2	Kawakami (6-9)	McCann (15)	64-57	T-2	-6 ½
122	8/21	FLA	H	L	3-5	Vazquez (10-9)	LaRoche (20)	64-58	3	-6 ½
123	8/22	FLA	H	W	4-3	Hanson (9-2)	Infante (2), Escobar (12)	65-58	T-2	-6 ½
124	8/23	FLA	H	W	7-5	Moylan (6-2)	McCann (16)	66-58	2	-6 ½
125	8/25	SD	H	L	1-2 (12)	Medlen (3-4)	--	66-59	T-2	-7
126	8/26	SD	H	L	5-12	Kawakami (6-10)	McCann (17)	66-60	3	-8
127	8/27	SD	H	W	9-1	Vazquez (11-9)	LaRoche (21)	67-60	T-2	-7
128	8/28	PHI	A	L	2-4	Hanson (9-3)	--	67-61	T-2	-8
129	8/29	PHI	A	W	9-1 (8)	Lowe (13-8)	Anderson (12), Diaz (10), Escobar (13), Jones (16)	68-61	2	-7
130	8/30	PHI	A	L	2-3	Jurrjens (10-9)	Prado (9)	68-62	T-2	-8
131	8/31	FLA	A	W	5-2	Kawakami (7-10)	--	69-62	2	-7 ½
132	9/1	FLA	A	W	4-3	Hudson (1-0)	--	70-62	2	-7 ½
133	9/2	FLA	A	L	7-8	Gonzalez (3-4)	Escobar (14)	70-63	2	-7 ½
134	9/3	FLA	A	L	3-8	Medlen (3-5)	McCann (18)	70-64	T-2	-8 ½
135	9/4	CIN	H	L	1-3	Lowe (13-9)	McLouth (16)	70-65	3	-8 ½
136	9/5	CIN	H	L	1-3	Jurrjens (10-10)	--	70-66	3	-8 ½
137	9/6	CIN	H	L	2-4 (12)	Kawakami (7-11)	Ross(7)	70-67	3	-8 ½
138	9/8	HOU	A	W	2-1	Vazquez (12-9)	LaRoche (22), McLouth (17)	71-67	3	-8
139	9/9	HOU	A	L	1-2	Soriano (1-5)	--	71-68	3	-9
140	9/10	HOU	A	W	9-7	Lowe (14-9)	McLouth (18)	72-68	3	-8
141	9/11	STL	A	W	1-0	Jurrjens (11-10)	--	73-68	3	-8
142	9/12	STL	A	W	7-6	Gonzalez (4-4)	Hudson (1)	74-68	3	-7
143	9/13	STL	A	W	9-2	Vazquez (13-9)	LaRoche (23)	75-68	3	-7 ½

TICKETING & SCHEDULE

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LOCATION	PRICE	PREMIUM#	SEASON+
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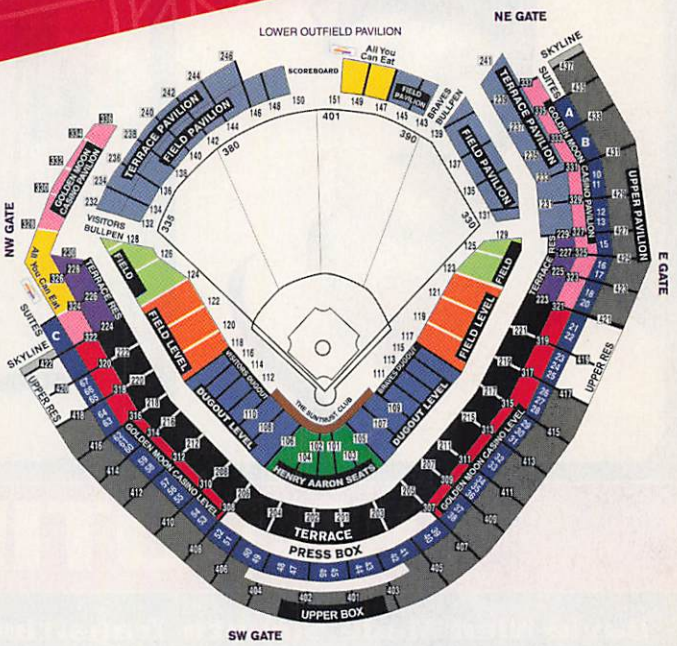


TURNER FIELD SEATING

Post-Season Dates Are Tentative, Unofficial and Subject To Change.

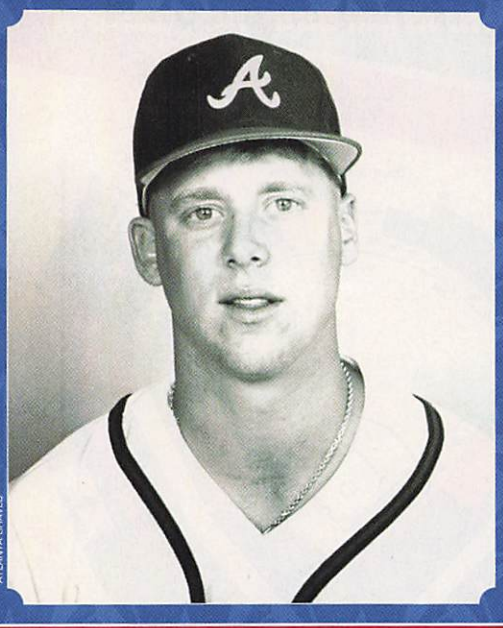
SEPT./OCT./NOV.

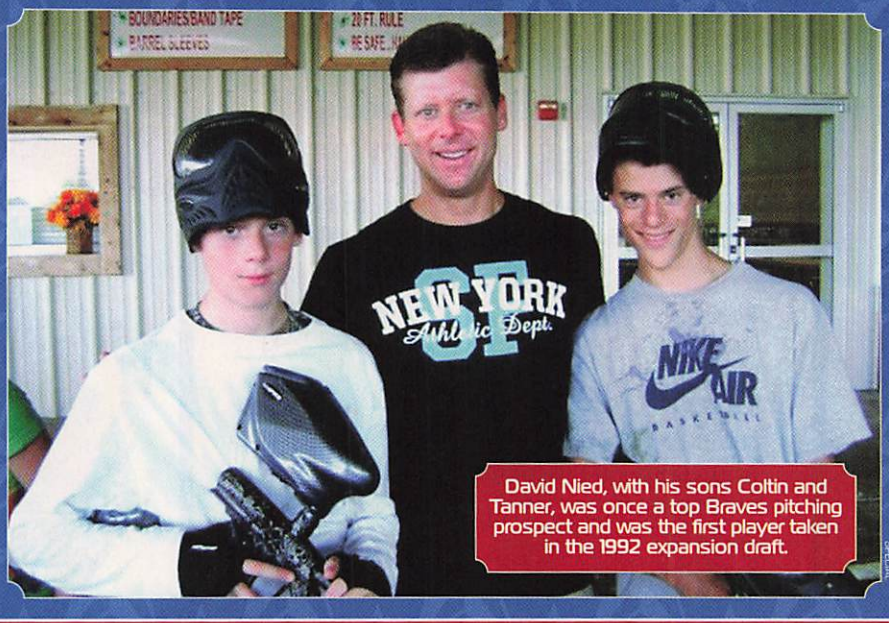
National League Division Series | National League Championship Series | World Series

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
27 1:30 PM WAS FSS	28 7:00 PM FLA SPSO	29 7:00 PM FLA SPSO	30 7:00 PM FLA SPSO	1 7:00 PM WAS SPSO	2 7:30 PM WAS SPSO	3 7:00 PM WAS SPSO
4 1:30 PM WAS FSS	5	6	7 NLDS	8 NLDS	9 NLDS	10 NLDS
11 NLDS	12 NLDS	13 NLDS	14	15 NLCS	16 NLCS	17 NLCS
18 NLCS	19 NLCS	20 NLCS	21 NLCS	22 NLCS	23 NLCS	24 NLCS
25	26	27	28 AL Home Game WS FOX	29 AL Home Game WS FOX	30	31 NL Home Game WS FOX
1 NL Home Game WS FOX	2 NL Home Game WS* FOX	3	4 AL Home Game WS* FOX	5 AL Home Game WS* FOX		

* If necessary

World Series home field advantage (Games 1, 2, 6 and 7) is awarded to the team representing the league that won the All-Star Game.


ATLANTA BRAVES



David Nied, with his sons Coltin and Tanner, was once a top Braves pitching prospect and was the first player taken in the 1992 expansion draft.

SHERIDAN

SHOOTING STAR

David Nied Made Smooth Transition To Family Business After Arm Injury

BY BRIAN KNAPP

DAVID NIED ALWAYS KNEW what life after baseball held for him.

When the former Braves pitcher retired in 1997, he immediately went to work for Cylinder Heads International – the company his father, Glen, founded – in Grand Prairie, Texas. Nied, now 40, moved from sales representative to vice president and currently involves himself in the day-to-day operation of the company, from sales to distribution. When his father retires, he will shoulder even more responsibility.

"We rebuild cylinder heads for cars," said Nied, best known by Atlanta fans as a former top pitching prospect who was the first player taken (by Colorado) in the 1992 expansion draft. "We do about 70 to 80 heads a day. I do most of my work on the phone, talking to different auto parts outlets, but I do deal with the public from time to time."

Nied never once considered extending himself in professional baseball as a coach or an executive once his playing days ended. The time it would have taken away from his family – he has two sons, Coltin and Tanner, ages 12 and 15, and a third child on the way in November – would have been far too high a price to pay.

"I knew I had something to fall back on here," said Nied, chosen in 2004 as one of the top 18 Richmond Braves players of the previous 20 years. "I've got the right personality you need in order to talk to people on an everyday basis. I like being off on the weekends and not missing the activities my kids are involved in. I wanted the same relationship with my kids as I had with my dad. Hopefully, I can finish up here and pass this on to my sons one day."

Cylinder Heads International, which started with only a handful of employees in 1968, has blossomed into one of the top cylinder head manufacturers in the country and currently employs upwards of 50 people.

"My dad had an auto parts store and didn't realize there was such a big market for cylinder heads," Nied said. "We've turned it into a pretty good sized operation."

Nied's transition to the 9-to-5 world connected him with his father on a deeper level. For years, their relationship was defined by how many strikeouts he recorded, how many earned runs he surrendered, and how many hits he allowed.

"It's been great," Nied said. "He lived and died with how I was playing in the minor leagues, how I was playing coming up. He'd call the press box two or three times a night. He couldn't wait until I got home to find out how my stuff was. Our first 25 years or so, all we talked about was sports."

After some rough patches, Nied's personal life has settled into place, as well. He was divorced from his first marriage five years ago and married his current wife, Heather, in 2006. The former Heather Cranford was a contestant on the second season of "The Bachelor," the ABC reality series that debuted in 2002.

"More people come up to her in public than come up to me," Nied said with a laugh. "I can't believe reality shows are like that."

They are expecting their first child in November.

"She'd never been married before," said Nied, who shares custody of his two sons with his first wife. "She's three years younger than I am and has waited a long time for this. I guess I'm ready. I'm looking forward to it."

A Duncanville, Texas, native, Nied has no regrets about a pitch-

ing career cut short by injury. Selected by the Braves in the 14th round of the 1987 draft, he went 57-36 as an Atlanta farmhand and reached the major leagues for the first time in 1992. He went 3-0 in limited time with the Braves, posting a 1.17 earned run average with 19 strikeouts in 23 innings. That followed an outstanding season at Triple-A Richmond where he was 14-9 with a 2.84 ERA and 159 strikeouts in 168 innings.

Called up to Atlanta at the end of the year, Nied, 23, was one of the first men to greet Sid Bream when he slid home with the game-winning run in Game 7 of the 1992 National League Championship Series at Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium.

"Even though I didn't pitch in a game in the series, that was the number-one highlight of my career," Nied said. "I wasn't on the post-season roster then, but I got put on after that because Kent Mercker got hurt in the pileup [at home plate]. They were a pitcher down, and the next thing I know, I'm on the World Series roster."

Nied, however, never threw another pitch as a Brave. Plucked from the organization by the Colorado Rockies with the top overall pick in the 1992 expansion draft, he soon found himself at the epicenter of excitement and expectation.

"I went from just another guy one day to an overnight media star in Colorado," Nied said. "It was really weird. Here I am, the face of the franchise, being introduced in front of 70,000 people and starting on Opening Day against Dwight Gooden."

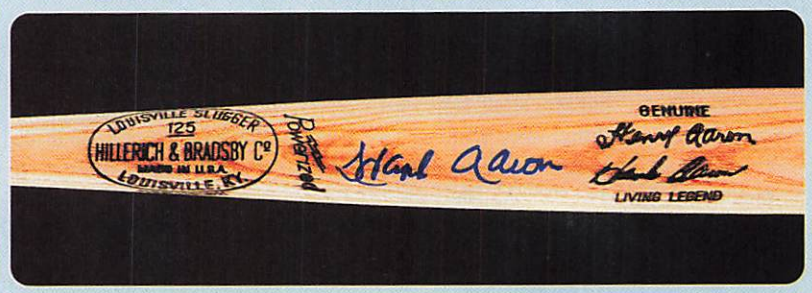
The 6-foot-2, 190-pound righthander spent four rollercoaster seasons with the Rockies. He's in Colorado's franchise record book for accomplishments such as first strikeout, first walk, first complete game and first shutout.

After he won a career-best nine games in the strike-shortened 1994 season, he made only eight subsequent appearances and was granted free agency two years later. Though he agreed to a deal with the Reds prior to the 1997 season, Nied never pitched in the major leagues again. His once-golden arm had failed him. The decision to retire, however, was relatively painless.

"At the time, I had gone through some arm injuries and I wasn't the same pitcher," Nied said. "Sure, I would have liked to have had a 10- to 12-year career, but I had gone through two really tough years, and it just wasn't quite the same."

Nied – who finished with a 17-18 career record and 5.06 ERA – now resides in Southlake, Texas, a Dallas suburb that former Braves pitcher John Burkett also calls home.

A SPECIAL BAT FOR A TRUE LEGEND



WHEN A NEW PIECE of Hank Aaron memorabilia becomes available, collectors take notice. The Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory has made a unique collectible even more enticing.

To commemorate Aaron's selection as their 2009 Living Legend, Louisville Slugger is selling 150 limited edition Hank Aaron bats for $500 apiece. Fans purchasing a bat also receive two invitations to the 2009 Louisville Slugger Living Legend Award Celebration on Nov. 13.

The bat features two different branded signatures. The first comes from Aaron's initial contract with Louisville Slugger in 1952 and reads "Henry Aaron". The second one, which has never appeared on one of their bats before, is from Aaron's second contract in 1971. It reads "Hank Aaron."

"The double brand signature is something that we've never done before," said Anne Jewell, executive director for the Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory. "We had to create a whole new plate to be able to brand that onto the bat."

The bats are Aaron's A99 model. They have the vintage Louisville Slugger logo used when he broke in with the 1954 Milwaukee Braves. In addition to the two branded signatures, the Hall of Fame outfielder actually autographed each bat, as well (see above example).

Aaron becomes the third selection for the annual Living Legend Award, following Ken Griffey Jr. and Frank Robinson. The award honors players who have not only achieved great things in baseball, but also reached out to impact society in other ways.

"Certainly, they've got to be great ballplayers to win the award," said Jewell. "But this one goes beyond that, as well, in terms of what else they have done above and beyond what they accomplished on the field."

All proceeds raised from selling the bats go to the Hank Aaron Chasing the Dream Foundation. This organization provides grants to Boys & Girls Clubs of America members to help them achieve their dreams and goals. Jewell explained why Louisville Slugger is excited to honor Aaron.

"Certainly the stats on the field speak for themselves," she said. "Then when you think about the story behind the statistics, in particular the home run record and what he endured to achieve that and the way he handled that was just so admirable. He has demonstrated that he's committed in a lot of ways to making things better for other people. We admire that, and we want to honor it and we want to help him do that. So, this becomes a fundraiser as well for his charity."

Aaron will speak at the Living Legend Award Celebration in Louisville, Ky. The event will have live music and a party atmosphere, as opposed to a sit down dinner. A special video presentation will pay tribute to Aaron's numerous achievements. Attendance is by invitation only and will be limited to 300 people. The event also serves as a preview party for Louisville Slugger's auction, which starts the following day.

ALUMNI NOTES

Andy Pafko (OF, 1953-59) will be inducted into the Eau Claire (Wisc.) Baseball Hall of Fame Feb. 1. The banquet will be at 7 p.m. at Florian Gardens, preceded by a social hour at 5:30. The cost is $55, including dinner, a baseball memorabilia display, a silent auction, raffles, and a chance to meet Pafko and Baseball Hall of Famer Harmon Killebrew, who will be the guest speaker. To buy tickets or for information, contact the Eau Claire Parks and Recreation Department at (715) 839-5032.

Phil Niekro (RHP, 1964-83, '87), **Javy Lopez** (C, 1992-2003), **Felix Millan** (2B, 1966-72), **Brad Clontz** (RHP, 1995-97), **John Rocker** (LHP, 1998-2001), **Denny Neagle** (LHP, 1996-98) and **Mike Bielecki** (RHP, 1991-92, '94, '96-97) were among celebrities participating in the Frank Howard Celebrity Golf Classic Aug. 17 at Old South Country Club in Lothian, Md., to benefit St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

David Justice (OF/1B, 1989-96) took part in the United One Celebrity Golf Tournament Aug. 20 at the Carmel Mountain Ranch Country Club in San Diego and in another charitable tournament Sept. 5 at the Journey at Pechanga in Temecula, Calif.

Phil Niekro (RHP, 1964-83, '87) gave the keynote address at a charity roast of former Athens, Ga., mayor Upshaw Bentley Sept. 16 to raise money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. He also was named chairman for Georgia state senator Lee Hawkins' campaign for U.S. Congress for Georgia's 9th district.

Merv Rettenmund (Coach, 2000-01) took a tour of the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum on Aug. 12 when he was in Cooperstown, N.Y., coaching a team of 12-year-olds from the San Diego suburb of Poway at a baseball camp.

Howie Bedell (OF, 1962) is scheduled to be the speaker when the Clearfield County Chamber of Commerce holds its annual banquet and awards ceremony on Oct. 8 at Lawrence Hall in Clearfield, Pa. The public is invited. The event begins with a social hour at 5 p.m. Call (814) 765-7567 for reservations or information.

Jorge Sosa (RHP, 2005-06) was designated for assignment by Washington.

Mike Hampton (LHP, 2003-05, '08) was scheduled to have season-ending surgery Sept. 15 on his pitching shoulder and both knees after going on Houston's disabled list with a partially torn rotator cuff. He still made 21 starts (7-10, 5.30), his highest total since 2004 with the Braves.

Dale Murphy (OF/1B/C, 1976-90) was scheduled to be the keynote speaker Sept. 17 at the Boys & Girls Club of Greeneville (Tenn.) and Greene County's annual Champions Dinner.

The Red Sox signed **Paul Byrd** (RHP, 1997-98, 2004) to a minor league contract Aug. 6 and called him up from Triple-A Pawtucket to start Aug. 30.

Tampa Bay designated **Joe Nelson** (RHP, 2001) for assignment.

Alejandro Pena (RHP, 1991-92, '95) has begun giving private baseball lessons to kids. The lessons will be held at Fellowship Christian School at 10965 Woodstock Rd., in the Atlanta suburb of Roswell. Call Tellie Pena at (770) 862-202 or e-mail baseball-lessons@comcast.net for more information.

The Kansas City Royals extended the contract of general manager **Dayton Moore** through 2014. Moore held various positions for the Braves, including director of player personnel and assistant GM, from 1994-2006.

Ron Mahay (LHP, 2007) was designated for assignment by Kansas City, and then cleared waivers and signed with Minnesota.

John Smoltz (RHP, 1988-99, 2000-08) was released by Boston Aug. 17 and signed with the Cardinals Aug. 19.

BIRTHDAYS

OCTOBER

1ST	REMY HERMOSO (63)
	BUZZ CAPRA (62)
	PETE FALCONE (56)
	JEFF REARDON (54)
	ROBERTO KELLY (45)
	JOHN THOMSON (36)
2ND	MIKE DE LA HOZ (71)
	PAUL DOYLE (70)
	TREY MOORE (37)
3RD	BOB SKINNER (78)
	JIM BREAZEALE (60)
4TH	TED DAVIDSON (70)
	JIMY WILLIAMS (66)
	TONY LA RUSSA (65)
	DAVE SCHULER (56)
	CHARLIE LEIBRANDT (53)
	JOE BOEVER (49)
5TH	REY SANCHEZ (42)
6TH	GARY GENTRY (63)
	STEVE KLINE (62)
	CHARLIE VAUGHAN (62)
7TH	TIM UNROE (39)
	KRIS MEDLEN (24)
8TH	JIMMY KREMERS (44)
	JOE AYRAULT (38)
9TH	JOE PEPITONE (69)
10TH	LARRY MAXIE (69)
	FRANCISCO CABRERA (43)
	JOSH ANDERSON (27)
11TH	GREGG OLSON (43)
12TH	LUIS POLONIA (45)
	CHARLIE MORTON (26)
13TH	FRANK LACORTE (58)
14TH	**RYAN CHURCH (31)**
15TH	LOU KLIMCHOCK (70)
	DAVID CORTES (36)
	JUAN CRUZ (31)
16TH	LEO MAZZONE (61)
17TH	MIKE SANDLOCK (94)
	BRIAN SNITKER (54)
	JOHN ROCKER (35)
	JOHN ENNIS (30)
18TH	JERRY ROYSTER (57)
	TERRY CLARK (49)
	JEFF WETHERBY (46)
19TH	SANDY ALOMAR, SR. (66)
	DAVID PALMER (52)
	MARK DAVIS (49)
	JASON SHIELL (33)
20TH	RUDY SEANEZ (41)
21ST	EDDIE CARNETT (93)
	JUAN EICHELBERGER (56)
	TIM SPOONEYBARGER (30)
	ANDY MARTE (26)
23RD	CECIL BUTLER (72)
	BO MCLAUGHLIN (56)
	JIM PRESLEY (48)
24TH	OMAR MORENO (57)
	RAFAEL BELLIARD (48)
	STEVE ZIEM (48)
	MARK GRANT (46)
	MACAY MCBRIDE (27)
25TH	BOBBY THOMSON (86)
	ROY HARTSFIELD (84)
	SKIP GUINN (65)
	ROWLAND OFFICE (57)
	TOMMY BOGGS (54)
	JOE NELSON (35)
26TH	ARMANDO ALMANZA (37)
	SCOTT SOBKOWIAK (32)
27TH	MIKE LUM (64)
	BARRY BONNELL (56)
	TERRY BELL (47)
	PEDRO SWANN (39)
	MARTIN PRADO (26)
28TH	ANTHONY LEREW (27)
	NATE MCLOUTH (28)
29TH	GARY NEIBAUER (65)
30TH	BOBBY BRAGAN (92)
	GERALD PERRY (49)
	JOE JOHNSON (48)
31ST	PAUL ZUVELLA (51)
	FRED MCGRIFF (46)

ChopTalk
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KID DYNAMITE

THE TENTATIVE 2010 schedule is out (see page 27), so let the speculation begin!

That speculation, expected to be hot and heavy, will be similar to last year's when Braves fans wondered if a phenom named Tommy Hanson would begin the season in Atlanta's starting rotation. This off-season, the same type of conjecture will be tossed around endlessly about yet another phenom - still only 20 years old - but the most-decorated and most-anticipated position prospect since Andruw Jones arrived late in the 1996 season at age 19.

It's no secret that the Braves' biggest deficiency this season was a lack of hitting among the outfielders, particularly in the first half. It's also no secret that Heyward is expected to help remedy that situation soon.

After the Braves' No. 1 pick in the 2007 draft was named Minor League Player of the Year by USA Today *and* Baseball America, everyone wants to know how soon.

Don't expect Frank Wren to answer that question, no matter how many times it's put to him this off-season.

"We're very proud of Jason winning the Minor League Player of the Year awards," said Wren. "He's a special talent. He has so much ability, and he's so much fun to watch. We're all looking forward to the day he's an Atlanta Brave. He did a terrific job this year, as evidenced by the awards, and he's going to the Arizona Fall League to work on his overall game.

"We're always open, as we watch young players, as to how they're maturing, and we don't try to pre-determine anything going into spring training. That allows players to come in and prove whether or not they're ready. That's the type of approach we'll take next spring with Jason."

Heyward is a natural rightfielder, a position that's been split mainly by Matt Diaz and Ryan Church since Jeff Francoeur was traded. The job is open, and don't expect the Braves to bring someone in to fill it this off-season. The next full-time rightfielder will be Heyward, whether it's next April 5 against the Cubs at Turner Field or sometime later in the season.

The way Heyward performs in the Arizona Fall League could provide a good indication about just how ready he is for a major league job. Remember, Hanson was the MVP of the AFL a year ago, and even though the Braves chose to give him a couple of months at Triple A to start the season, that was due to several factors, including the overall strength of the other starting pitchers and not necessarily Hanson's degree of readiness.

The way Heyward shot from advanced Class-A Myrtle Beach to Triple-A Gwinnett this year certainly was somewhat reminiscent of how Andruw went from advanced Class A Durham to Atlanta in 1996.

When he began his first full season in the majors - 1997 - Andruw was only a couple of weeks shy of his 20th birthday. Heyward will still be 20 for the entire first half of next season (turns 21 Aug. 9). He is young, very young, and that may keep him in suburban Atlanta early next year. Then again, he's extremely mature, and he's very, very good. Thus, the speculation is at hand - and is very justified.

Congratulations to Heyward and all the other farm system players who were recognized as pitchers and players of the year at Turner Field Sept. 18. Heyward was the organizational player of the year, and Craig Kimbrel the organizational pitcher of the year.

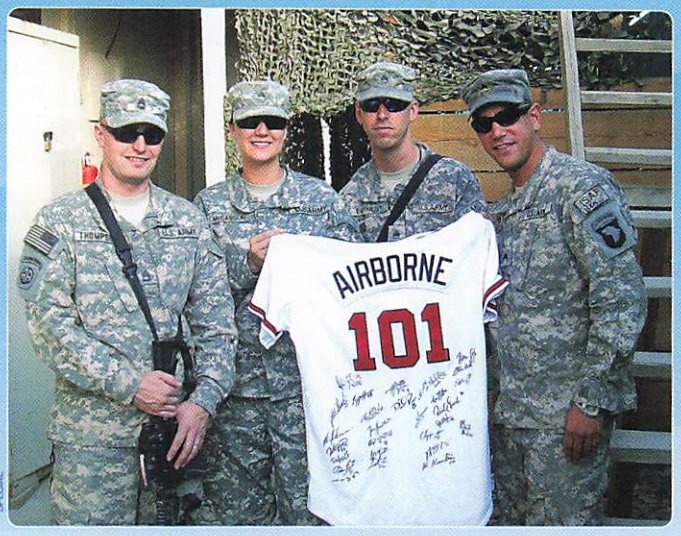
Other winners: Gwinnett pitcher Mariano Gomez and player Barbaro Canizares; Mississippi pitcher Kyle Cofield and player Matt Young; Myrtle Beach pitcher Cory Gearrin and player Donell Linares; Rome pitcher J.J. Hoover and player Yoel Campusano; Danville pitcher Matt Crim and player Riaan Spanjer-Furstenburg; Gulf Coast pitcher Robinson Lopez and player Christian Bethancourt; and Dominican Summer League pitcher Andy Otero and player Edison Sanchez.

Congrats, also to manager Paul Runge and his Danville Braves for winning that franchise's second Appalachian League championship in four years.

THIS ISSUE OF CHOPTALK was mailed Sept. 22. The November issue will be mailed Oct. 16.

BEYOND BASEBALL

BY **PATTY RASMUSSEN**

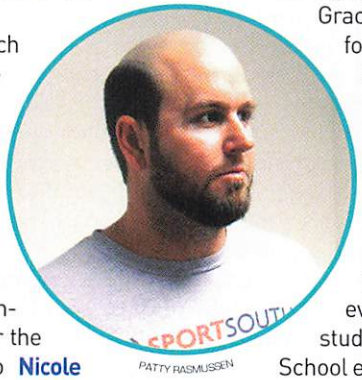


Thanks to Ryan Chruch,SFC Ehren Bernett (R) and a few of his colleagues in Afghanistan show off a Braves jersey, signed by the entire team and personalized with their unit, 101st Airborne.

RYAN'S ARMY

"HOO-AH" was the likely cry from Sergeant First Class **Ehren Berrett** and his fellow soldiers when they received a Braves jersey signed by the entire team and personalized to read "Airborne" and "101" on the back. Berrett, a member of the 101st Airborne Division from Ft. Campbell, Ky., currently serving in Afghanistan, contacted **Ryan Church** asking for a photo or some other type of memorabilia for a display where the unit is stationed. Instead, Church decided to go all out, arranging for the jersey to be made and then making sure each of his teammates signed it. Coincidentally, Church's brother, **Matt**, is a member of the U.S. Army Special Forces stationed in Colorado Springs, and has made several overseas deployments.

WHILE IN FLORIDA to play the Marlins in early September, Aussie reliever **Peter Moylan** (below) decided to see if changing his hairdo might change the team's fortunes. Teammate **Adam LaRoche** shaved the hair off the top of Moylan's head, leaving the sides and back longer. In combination with his full beard, the haircut caused Moylan to bear a slight resemblance to former Brave **John Smoltz**. The new look didn't last long. Moylan shaved the back and sides after the team lost their fourth game in as many days on Sept. 5...



PATTY RASMUSSEN

Ronnie Snitker, wife of third base coach **Brian Snitker**, dropped in at the release party for Atlanta based rock band Collective Soul's new CD. The party was held Sept. 5 at the downtown Atlanta W hotel's Drinkshop. **Ed Roland**, the lead singer of the band, hails from Stockbridge, Ga., south of Atlanta, and talked with Ronnie about the Braves' chances to get in the playoffs. She also met former Atlanta Falcons running back **Warrick Dunn**, who now plays for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Ronnie ran into **Nicole Jones**, wife of former Braves centerfielder **Andruw Jones**, outside the hotel preparing to have dinner with friends at the hotel restaurant...

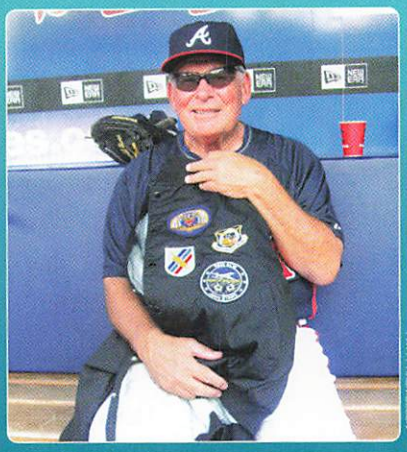
A draw party for the **Tim Hudson-Brian McCann** Atlanta Braves Celebrity-Amateur Golf Tournament was held Aug. 23 at the City Club of Buckhead. Among the 300 attendees were the host couples, Tim and **Kim Hudson** and Brian and **Ashley McCann**, and their teammates **Greg Norton** with his wife, **Jaena**, and **Kelly Johnson** and his wife, **Lauren**. **Brian Snitker** and his wife, **Ronnie**, also joined the party. In addition to the task of pairing up the foursomes for the tournament played the next day at three area golf courses, the draw party featured a silent and live auction with plenty of unique items. The event raised $47,260 for the AFLAC Cancer Center at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. The biggest item in the live auction was Hudson's Honky Tonk VIP experience that included pre-party entrance for four the night before the concert, four tickets to the Josh Gracin/Blake Shelton concert and entrance for four to the backstage after-party. The package brought in a whopping $6,700 dollars. A second Honky Tonk package was auctioned for $5,250 and a four-night stay at the Hudsons' farm, Kenteska Plantation, brought in an additional $5,000...

Kenshin Kawakami felt right at home when he visited the Georgia Japanese Language School on Aug. 22. And he didn't even need an interpreter! Approximately 400 students, all Japanese, attend the Language School each Saturday in an attempt to keep their language and cultural skills intact while they live in Georgia. Kawakami participated in a Q&A session with the students and gave a pitching lesson to the baseball team. He has also provided tickets to Braves games to students at the Language School through the Braves Reach Out Be Our Guest program...

Lynn and **Lauren Cadahia**, wife and daughter of bench coach **Chino Cadahia**, took the road trip to California, Aug. 3-9. While in San Diego, they attended the Broadway tour-

MILITARY MAN

BOBBY COX spent 45 minutes during batting practice Aug. 26 posing for pictures and signing balls, caps, programs and whatever else was thrust at him by over 100 members of the Armed Services visiting Turner Field from nearby Naval Air Station and Dobbins Air Force Base. In exchange for his show of goodwill, Cox was presented with a personalized jacket (R) bearing unit patches of some of the airmen, which he eagerly showed to people in the dugout.



PATTY RASMUSSEN

ing company show "Wicked" and enjoyed their "wicked good" seats just eight rows behind the orchestra...

Turner Field was invaded by the British on Aug. 17 when the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) filmed a day at the ballpark for a six-part documentary series called "Around the World in 80 Days." The series follows six pairs of presenters as they travel east from London in a challenge to make it around the world within 80 days. The BBC enlisted two Atlanta area families, **Russell** and **Nancy Hendricks** and their children **Elena**, **Julia** and **Tyler**, and **Harvey** and **Jiggy Young** and daughters **Emma** and **Olivia**, to show the presenters the ropes of watching a baseball game. Due to unfortunate weather delays, the film crew and presenters, actors **Shane Richie** and **Josie Wallace**, showed up in the middle innings of the game but in plenty of time to learn a little about the national pastime. The American families cheered for Shane and Josie when they danced on top of the dugout as part of a between-innings contest, taught them some of the finer points of baseball, and attempted to teach them how to sing "Take Me Out to the Ballgame." Shane and Josie received autographed items to be auctioned to raise money for a televised charity event in England, Children in Need...

Braves Family Day was held on Aug. 23, and for the first time in recent memory, it wasn't a scorcher or a monsoon. The families mingled on the field, the players/dads pitched to their kids, watched as they ran the bases, and group pictures were taken. One- year-old **Tyler Smith**, the son of video coordinator **Rob Smith**, was taken with **Jair Jurrjens**. The toddler held onto Jurrjens' finger and led him around the clubhouse corridors. After an hour of playing on the field, the players returned to the clubhouse, and the wives and children enjoyed a picnic lunch at one of the Turner Field patios...

Not only did outfielder **Reid Gorecki** get his first major league hit against his favorite childhood team, the Mets, in front of more than 60 family and friends at Citi Field, but his next road trip took him to Philadelphia, where he once again played in front of long-time friends from his college days at the University of Delaware, located in nearby Newark...

A special addition to this year's Rally Foundation November festivities will be the **Brian McCann** Rally Celebrity Softball Game on Friday, Nov. 13, at the Georgia Tech baseball stadium. Players will be announced later, but the two captains for the game will be former NFL Super Bowl Coach, **Sam Wyche**, and former Braves pitching coach, **Leo Mazzone**. The Benefit Bash will be held on Nov. 12. Check the Rally Foundation website (rallyfoundation.org) for more details on tickets.

ATLANTA BRAVES

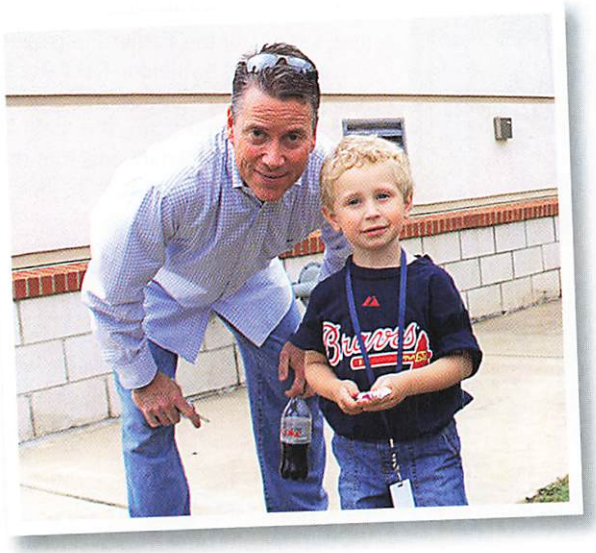
THE PROPHET

CHIPPER JONES riled a few college football fans in his adopted home state of Georgia when he showed up on the set of ESPN's College GameDay wearing a University of Florida football jersey (above with Alabama cheerleaders). He added insult to injury when he picked Oklahoma State to defeat Georgia in the season-opener - which they did (24-10). A Florida native and long-time Florida Gators fan, Jones said he had a blast doing the show. ESPN broadcast its College GameDay show from downtown Atlanta's Centennial Olympic Park on Sept. 5.

TALKIN' CHOP

LETTERS & PHOTOS FROM OUR READERS

WHETHER YOU'RE HAVING FUN AT TURNER FIELD, EXPERIENCING A CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH YOUR FAVORITE BRAVES PLAYER, OR JUST SHOWING OFF YOUR COLLECTION OF BRAVES STUFF OR TRYING ON YOUR NEW BRAVES SHIRT, WE WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT AND SEE A PICTURE.



THE CITY OF ANGELS

My grandson, Scott Edmondson, has been a Braves fan since watching them on TV with me from the age of 6. He's now 32. He's kept up with them regularly, even though going to school and traveling out of the county sometimes. When we talk, we always have time for the latest on the Braves. He and his wife, Laur are in Los Angeles finishing school, he at UCLA and Laur at Pepperdine. On the night of the Braves-Dodgers game in Los Angeles Aug. 7, Laur went into labor with their first child. She gave birth to a son and the newest Braves fan just about the time that the Braves came from behind and then beat the Dodgers in 12 innings!

Liz Lavender
Madison, Ala.

THE GREATEST EVER

I received the July issue of ChopTalk covering the retirement of Greg Maddux's jersey #31. It is really a very nice tribute to the greatest pitcher that ever lived. I have followed Maddux's career for over 20 years and have witnessed many wonderful games, plays, and just wonderfully played baseball. I still watch baseball, but have noticed myself being disappointed in the performance of many pitchers until I realized I was unconsciously comparing them to Maddux. There will never be another Maddux. He was a wonderful player and a remarkable man. I truly miss watching him. I just want to commend both ChopTalk and the Braves for giving such a great tribute to such a deserving player.

Sharon Perez, Villa Hills, Ky.

HALL OF FAME ENCOUNTER

My 3-year-old grandson, Houston, and I went to see our Double-A Mississippi Braves at Trustmark Park in Pearl, Mississippi, after a great Easter lunch and a round of egg hunting. We ran into future Hall of Famer Tom Glavine leaving the park after what we hoped was not his last outing.

Jeff Pace
Pearl, Miss.

PHOUL PHOWL!

Hello from the city where the baseball team doesn't know how to loose! It's so frustrating to see a Phillies player on the front page of the newspaper almost every day with the announcement that they pulled out another one.

I tried to do my part - I punched the Phillie Phanatic in the nose! The sons of one of our patients came in for a visit, and one had just gone to the ballgame the night before and was resplendent in his Phillie "phinery" (that's how they talk here!), complete with a big "phoam" #1 glove and a stuffed Phanatic. I took one look at the Phanatic and gave him a sock in his long nose. You should've seen the look on the kid's face.

Then I had to explain how I'm a Braves fan. I ran up to my room and brought back my camera and tomahawk (autographed by Leo Mazzone), and the boy's father took a few photos. The boy is Vance Morris.

I just received my August ChopTalk. Chipper sure has some home. I'd like to see another World Series ring on display, and another pennant at the stadium. I'll see what I can do to that Phillie Phanatic the next time he comes!

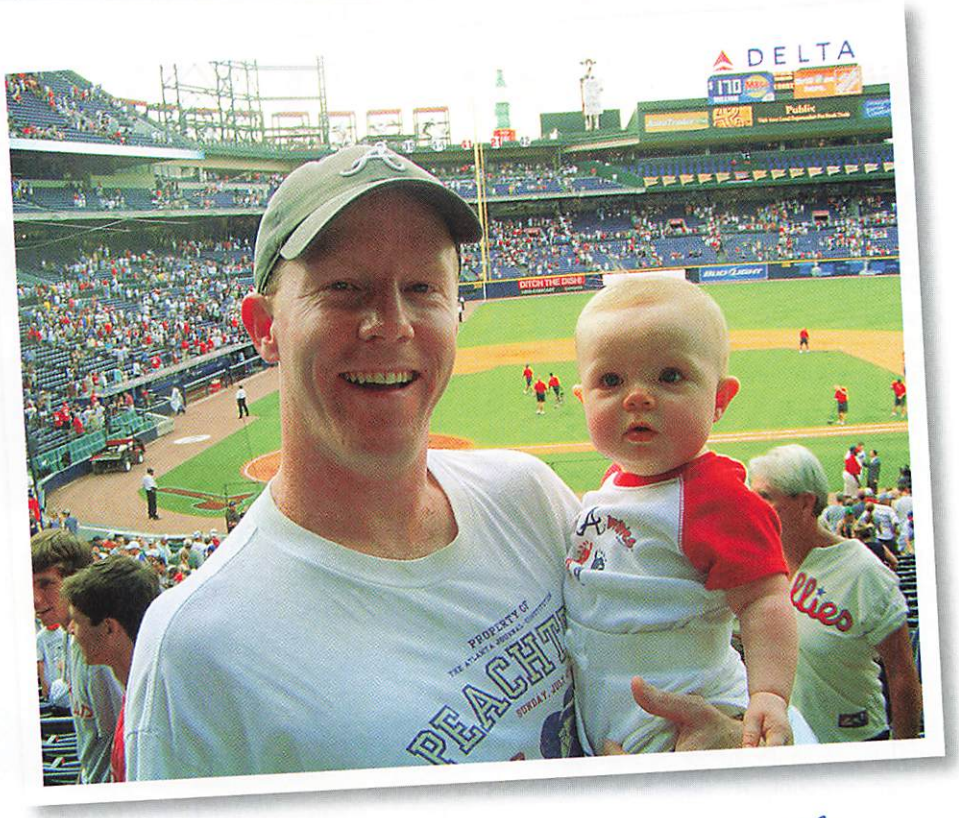
SISTER MARIAN
Philadelphia, Pa.

CHOPTALK AND THE ATLANTA BRAVES SUPPORT OUR TROOPS

HANK, MURPH & A BABE

I'm an Atlanta native, and I had a great Braves year. First, I had the opportunity to meet both Hank Aaron and Dale Murphy in January. Then, my Braves year was capped off when I took my 10-month-old daughter, Julianne, to her first game at Turner Field on Aug. 15 - a walk-off win against the Phillies!

BRIAN LEE
Atlanta, Ga.



MADDUX'S BIG DAY

My wife and I attended the Braves Hall of Fame luncheon for Greg Maddux. We had a wonderful experience and were so honored when Greg agreed to have his picture taken with us. We took home our table's centerpiece, lots of photos, and a ton of memories. Thanks to the Braves for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

BILL & CAROLYN CAULKINS
Chattanooga, Tenn.

SHARE YOUR BRAVES FEVER!

WRITE TO US

Talkin' Chop c/o ChopTalk
P.O. Box 81247
Conyers, Ga. 30013-9247

Letters@ChopTalkonline.com

Letters and photos chosen for publication are subject to editing, and photos cannot be returned. Computer printouts of photos cannot be published. High-resolution files preferred. ChopTalk reserves the right to use letters and photos for promotional and advertising purposes.

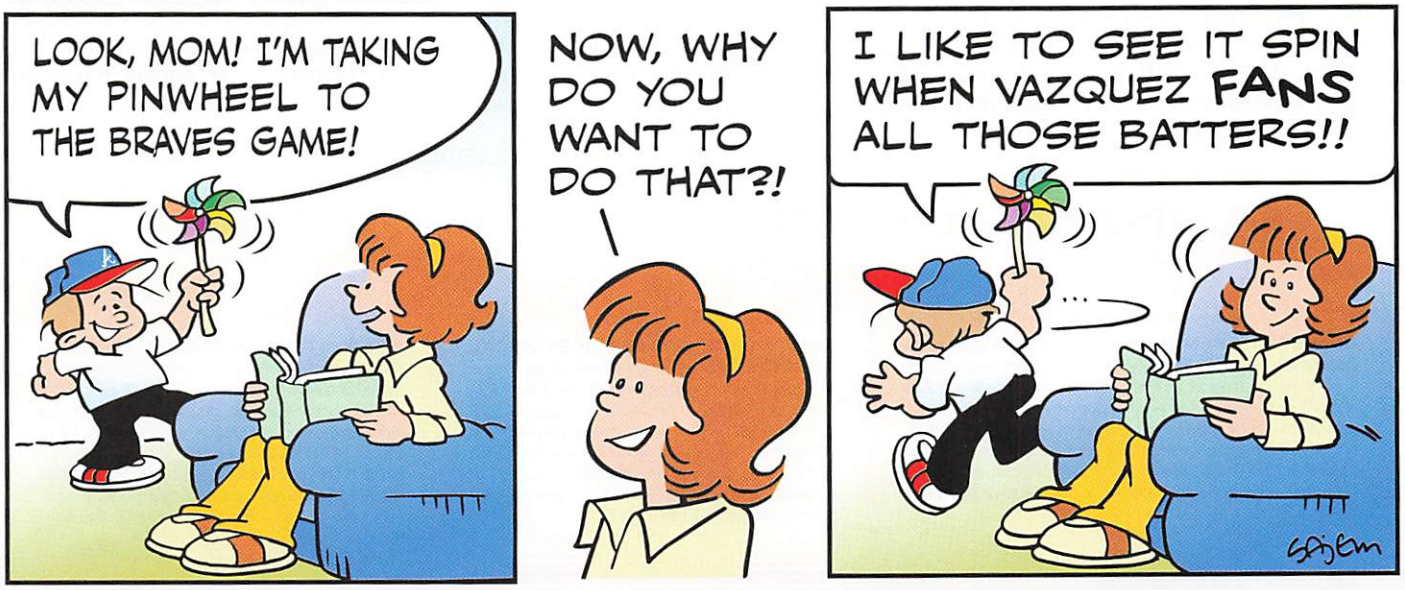
WRITE THE BRAVES

Atlanta Braves
P.O. Box 4064
Atlanta, Ga. 30302

For the Braves players, Bobby Cox, the coaches, broadcasters, or members of the front office.

If you request a response, be sure to include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Never send anything of value that you want returned. This is no guarantee of a reply.

GONE WITH THE WIND


LOOK, MOM! I'M TAKING MY PINWHEEL TO THE BRAVES GAME!
NOW, WHY DO YOU WANT TO DO THAT?!
I LIKE TO SEE IT SPIN WHEN VAZQUEZ FANS ALL THOSE BATTERS!!

HOW I MADE IT TO THE MAJORS

Team Photographer Pouya Dianat Goes To Great Lengths To Capture The Sights Of Turner Field

BY STEVE FALL

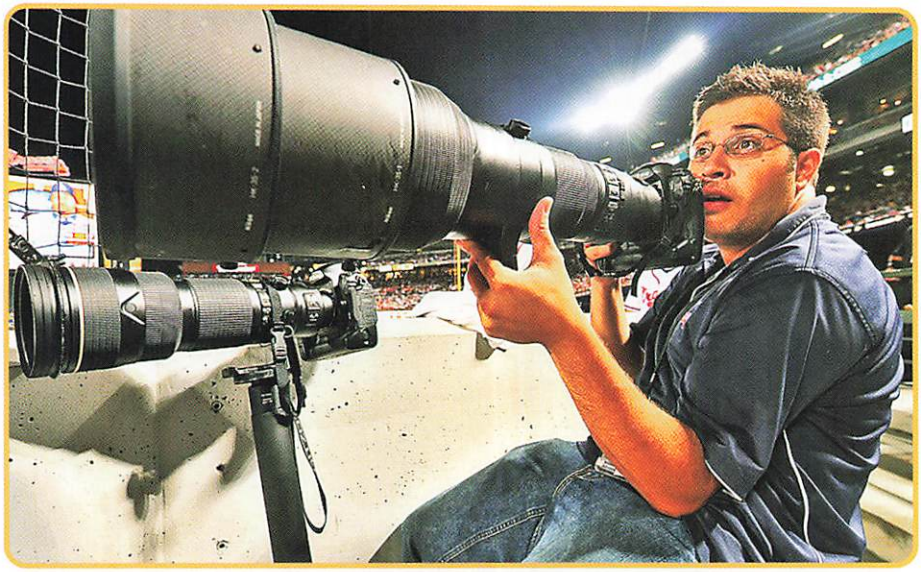
LIKE THE TEAM he photographs, Pouya Dianat does whatever it takes to excel in his job. He even shot photos from a helicopter hovering over Turner Field during the Red Sox series in June.

"With 81 games of baseball, it's going out there every night and trying to come up with new ways to show the Turner Field experience," said Dianat, who started with the team in February 2009. "Show fans, show players having a good time, and get some good photos of big slides into home plate."

Dianat works every home game and arrives around 3 p.m. for night games. He photographs some of batting practice, as well as visits by VIPs and guests that come down to the field. Before the season starts, he shoots photos in spring training for the team yearbook. He likes how the Braves encourage him to try new things and use his creativity. Many of his photos appear in ChopTalk, among other places.

The helicopter ride required Transportation Security Administration (TSA) approval and Bobby Cox's okay, as well. Low flyovers between innings enabled Dianat to take some unique shots of a capacity crowd. He also sets up a pre-focused remote camera before games – situated anywhere from the stadium roof to behind home plate – to capture special moments on the field.

"I spend about an hour getting that ready almost every day," said Dianat of the remote camera. "Ninety-nine times out of 100, it won't make a picture. But one of my favorite photos this season was Brian McCann sliding safely into home plate, and his glasses are popping off."



The 24-year-old Dianat was born in Tehran, Iran, and moved to Washington, D.C., in 1991 when he was six years old. He earned a degree in print journalism from the University of Maryland in 2007. During college, he worked at both The Washington Post and The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

After graduating from college in 2007, Dianat moved to Atlanta and again worked for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution as a photographer from August 2007 through February 2009. While at the paper, he covered the Braves for four months. That gave him an opportunity to meet people with the team, including his future boss Beth Marshall, the Braves' director of public relations.

Dianat photographed football and basketball games while in Washington. Although he had watched the Braves on TBS, he didn't know that much about baseball until moving to Atlanta, and he never played the game growing up.

"I am very athletically challenged," said Dianat. "So, I stay behind the camera – which is where I should be – and I make the real athletes look good."

Dianat recommends that aspiring baseball photographers approach everything creatively and get to know the game.

"I know there are a lot of very passionate fans and photographers out there," he said. "It's a combination of putting those two together."

FAN CLUBS

BRAVES 400 FAN CLUB

BRAVES 400 FAN CLUB is the official fan club of the Atlanta Braves. It is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting baseball at all levels. Annual membership is $25 and includes a newsletter and the opportunity to participate in activities such as road trips, luncheons, the annual banquet, and charitable events. Send payment to: Braves 400 Fan Club, P.O. Box 7689, Atlanta, Ga. 30309. For more information, call the organization's hotline at (770) 416-4539 or visit braves400.org.

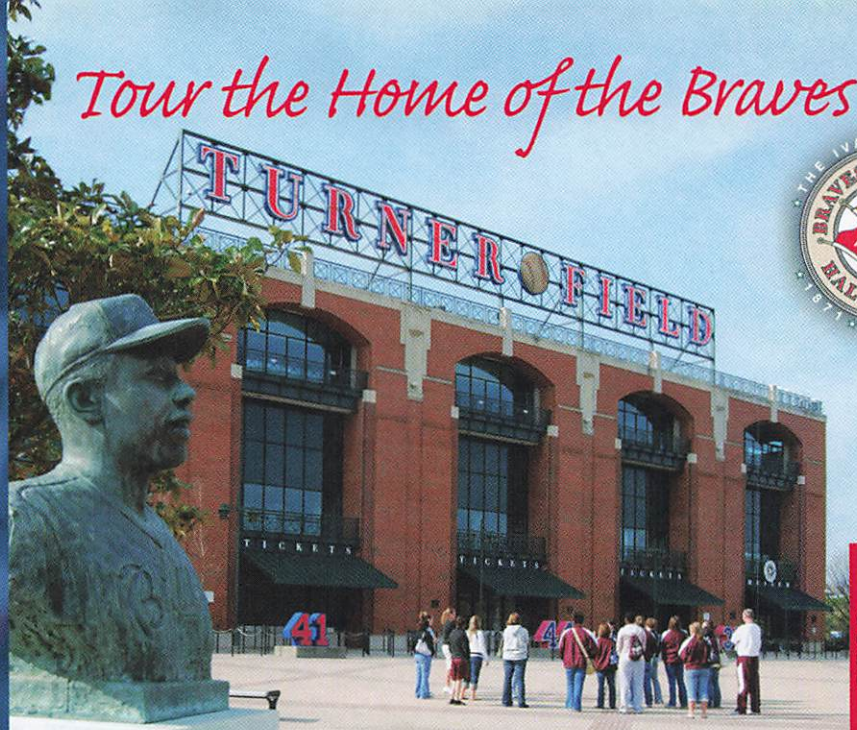
MILWAUKEE BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MILWAUKEE BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION is a non-profit organization that promotes the memory of the Milwaukee Braves (1953-65). Annual membership is $25 and includes a newsletter. Send payment to: Milwaukee Braves Historical Association, 6700 N. Range Line Rd., Glendale, Wisc. 53209. For information, call (414) 347-1212 or visit milwaukeebraveshistoricalassociation.com.

BOSTON BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

BOSTON BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION is a non-profit organization dedicated to keeping alive the memory of the Braves in the city where the franchise began in 1871 and that it represented through 1952. Annual membership is $15 and includes a newsletter. Send payment to: Boston Braves Historical Association, P.O. Box 5668, Marlboro, Mass. 01752. For more information, call (508) 485-1423 or visit Bostonbraves.com.

Tour the Home of the Braves



VISIT THE BRAVES MUSEUM & HALL OF FAME AT TURNER FIELD and view more than 600 Braves artifacts and photographs on display. See items from the team's years in Boston (1871-1952), Milwaukee (1953-65), and Atlanta (1966-present), including Hank Aaron's 715th home run bat and ball, the 1995 World Series trophy and much more.

TAKE A ONE-HOUR GUIDED TOUR OF TURNER FIELD to many areas off limits during games, such as the press box, clubhouse, dugout and the SunTrust Club. Group and school tours are offered year-round, including specialized tours on the subjects of math and careers in sports. **Call 404-614-2311.**

2009	Oct. 19-31 **Trick or Treat at Turner Field**	Children 13 & under will fill a bag with Braves promotional items at different stops on the tour.
2009	Nov. 14 **Free Admission Day**	All fans will receive free admission on this day.
2009	Dec. 1-22 **A Toy for A Tour**	Children 13 & under who bring a new, unwrapped toy receive a complimentary tour of Turner Field.
2010	January **Two for 10 in 2010**	For the month of January, two people can take a tour of Turner Field for $10
2010	February **Black History Month**	Children 13 & under who read a book about the Negro Leagues receive a complimentary tour.
2010	March **Gearing Up for the 2010 Season**	Adults who donate new or gently-used baseball equipment will receive 50% off adult admission to the museum and tours.

Call 404-614-2311 for more information on these promotions.

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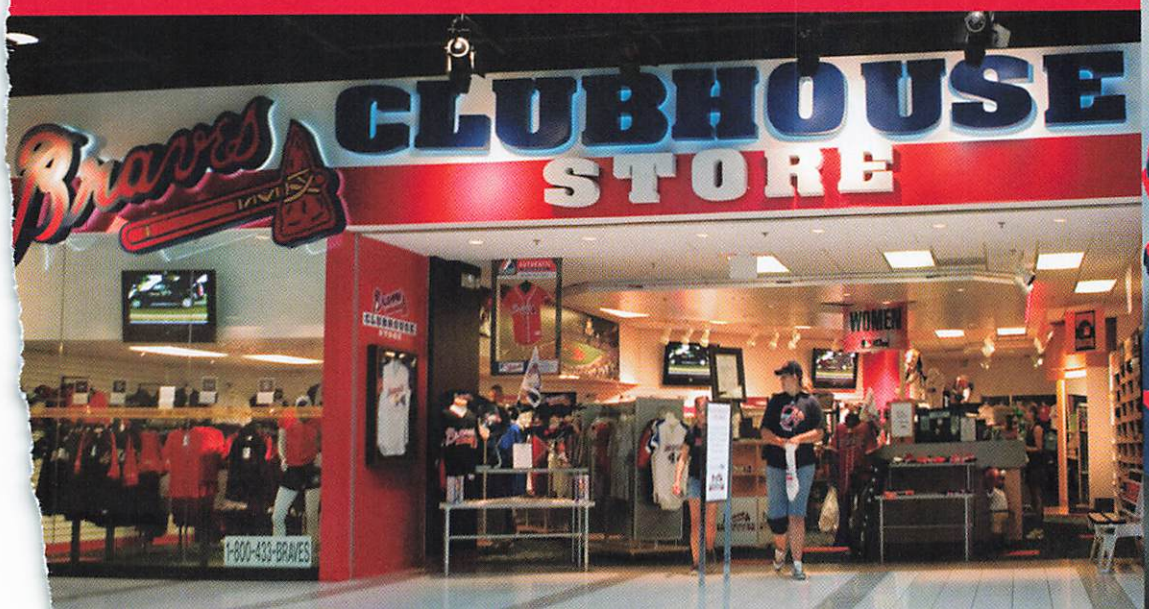
OCTOBER SPECIAL

Save 20% on regularly priced Braves Merchandise catalog orders during October. To receive the discount, call 800-433-BRAVES and say "catalog".

Braves CLUBHOUSE COLLECTION

WE'VE OUTFITTED THE BRAVES. WE CAN DO THE SAME FOR YOU.

Call 800-433-BRAVES M-F 8:30 am-6:00 pm or visit the Braves Clubhouse Store at CNN Center, 10 am to 6 pm daily



Gamer Jacket from Majestic
100% polyester. Quarter-zip pullover, woven Authentic logo, left sleeve embroidery. Adult sizes: M, L, XL, XXL.
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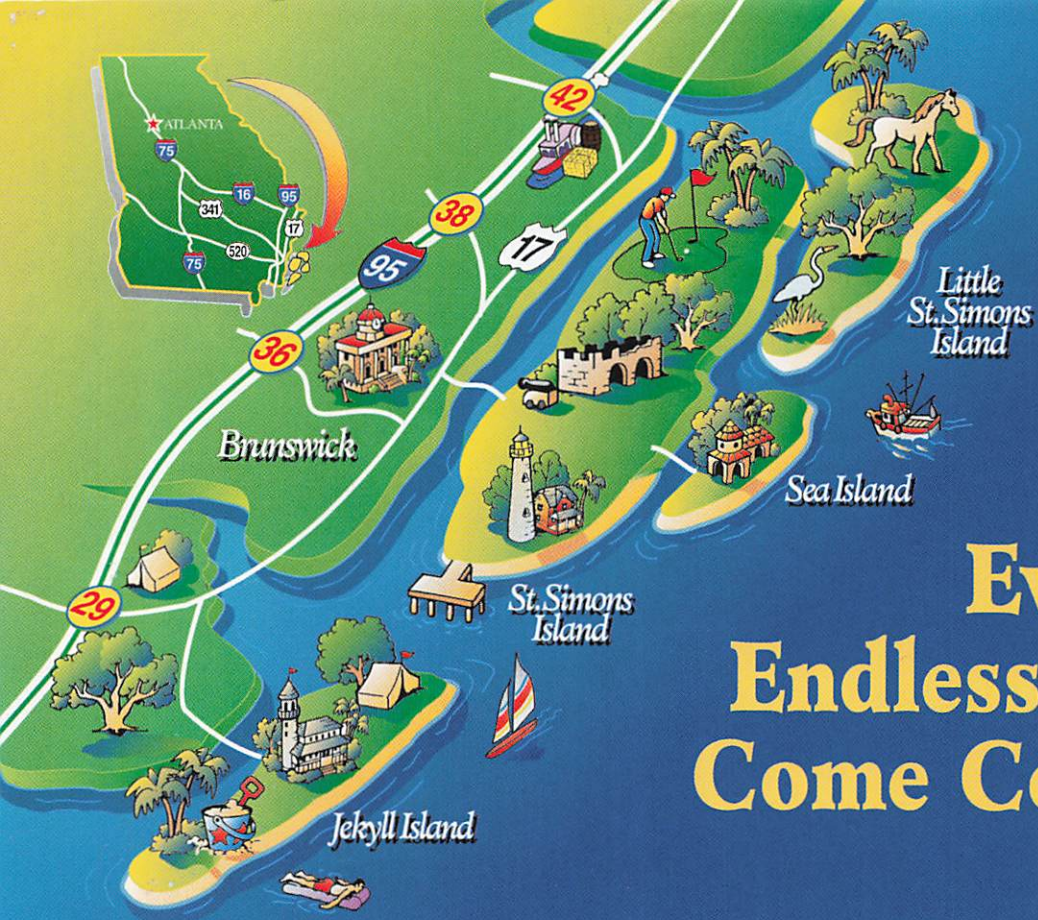
Youth Jacket 100% nylon taslan. Youth sizes: S-M, L-XL #221 **$70**



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For a free vacation planning guide: 1-800-933-COAST (2627)

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